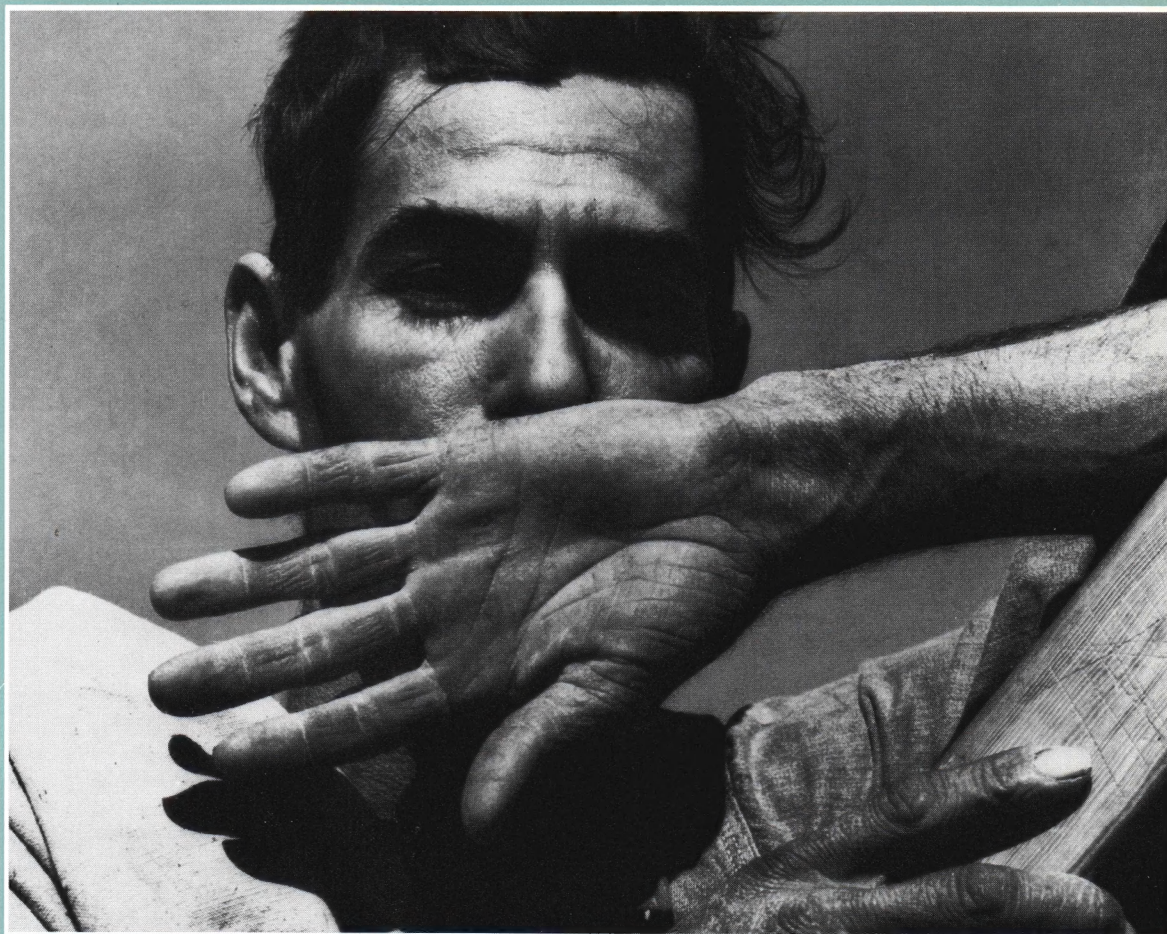


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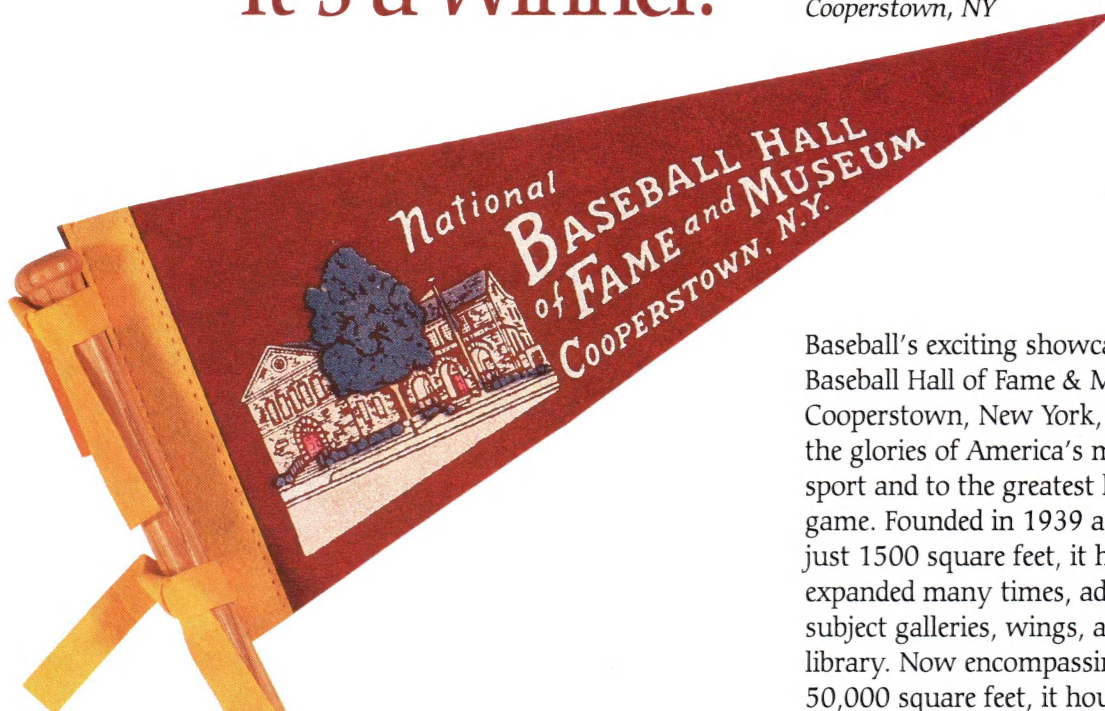
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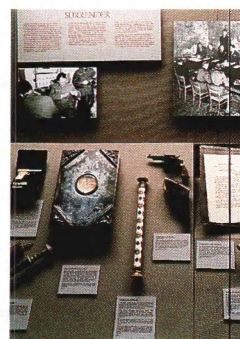
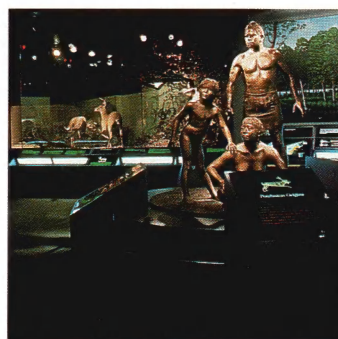
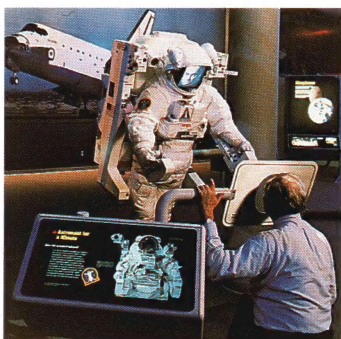
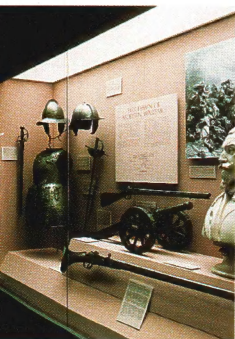
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Cover: Migratory Cotton Picker, Eloy, Ariz., black and white photograph, 1940, by Dorothea Lange. Above: A Montgomery, Ala., bus, similar to the one where Rosa Parks stood her ground four decades ago, is on display at the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis. See page 44.

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Museum News (ISSN 0027-4089) is published bimonthly (J/F, M/A, M/J, J/A, S/O, N/D) by the American Association of Museums, 1225 Eye St. N.W., Suite 200, Washington, D.C. 20005; 202/289-1818; FAX 202/289-6578. Annual subscription rate is \$38. Copies are mailed to all members. Single copy is \$7. Overseas airmail is an additional \$45. Membership in AAM includes \$19 from annual membership dues applicable to a subscription to *Museum News*, except for students and retirees. [This notice is required by the U.S. Postal Service.] POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Museum News*, 1225 Eye St. N.W., Suite 200, Washington, D.C. 20005. Copyright 1994, American Association of Museums. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine or its cover may be reproduced without written consent of the copyright proprietor. *Museum News* is indexed in *The Art Index*, published quarterly and available in public libraries. Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of AAM. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Printed in the U.S.A. by Pendell Press, Midland, MI.

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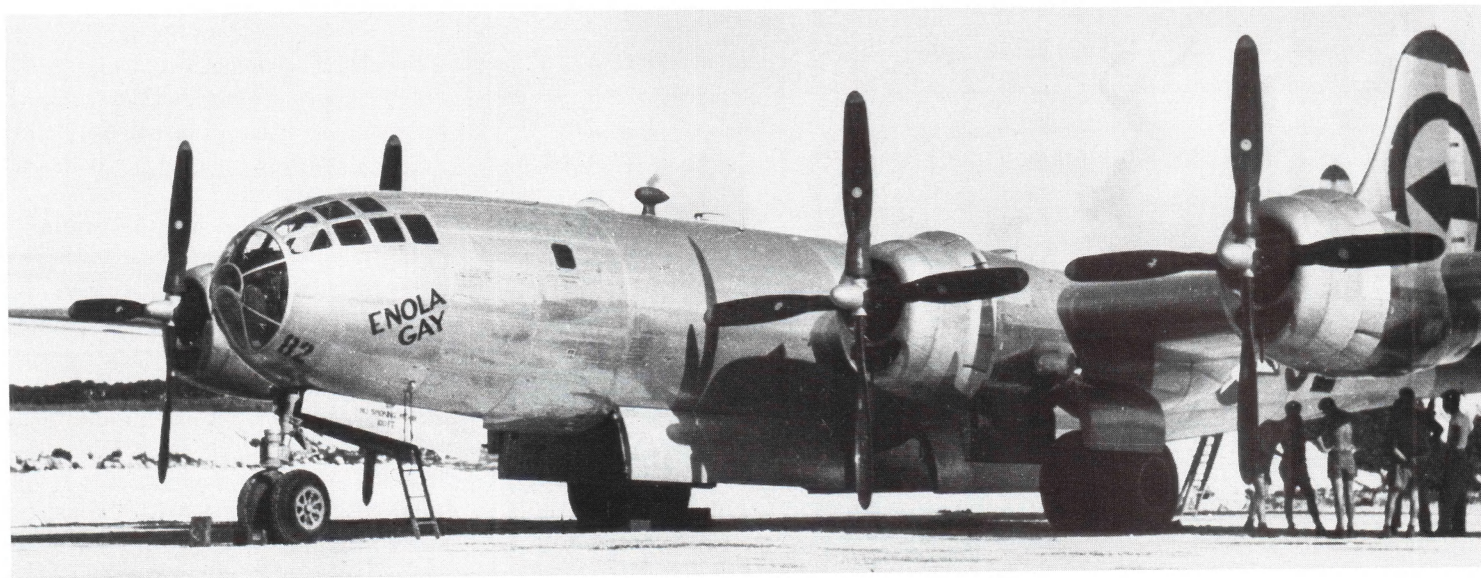
Bombardment: The Sequel

It's been nearly 50 years since the United States dropped two A-bombs on Japan, ending World War II and sparking intense controversy on the ethics of using atomic power for military purposes. Now the Smithsonian Institution

fuselage of the aircraft as a central feature of an exhibit on the atomic bomb and the end of the war. Never before has the famous plane been displayed in a museum.

World War II veterans had gotten wind several years ago of the museum's intention to display the aircraft, and some protested plans to place it in an exhibit that both explored in depth the

lished pattern in which the Smithsonian intentionally depicts U.S. military airpower in a negative way." A six-page article on the exhibit in the April issue of the AFA's *Air Force Magazine* said that the Committee for the Restoration and Display of the *Enola Gay*, a group of World War II B-29 veterans, had collected some 8,000 signatures on a petition asking the Smithsonian to "display



finds itself embroiled in another—and related—debate on how to exhibit the aircraft that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima.

During the past decade, the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., has spent some 35,000 hours of labor and about \$1 million restoring the *Enola Gay*, the B-29 that dropped the first atomic bomb on Aug. 6, 1945. In May 1995, the museum plans to display the forward

effects of the bombing on the Japanese and raised philosophical questions about such a use of atomic power. Since the Air Force Association (AFA) reviewed a copy of the exhibit script this January, such objections have grown in intensity and number.

The AFA, a Virginia-based nonprofit organization, took the position that the planned exhibition lacked balance and historical context, was designed to play on emotions, and was "part of an estab-

Exhibiting the Enola Gay: looking for the fine line between celebration and condemnation.

the aircraft properly or turn it over to a museum that will do so." Following both the publication of the magazine article and a resulting flurry of media attention, the AFA reports, veterans "bombarded" Congress with complaints about the federally funded exhibit.

The \$600,000 exhibit aims to place "the atomic bombings in Japan in a

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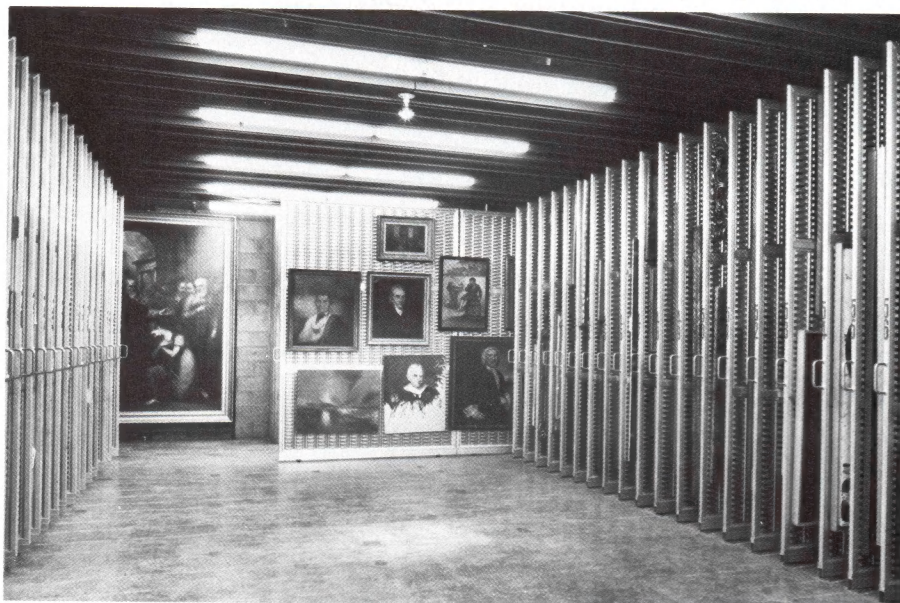
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broad historical context,” says curator Michael Neufeld. Delving into the causes and defining characteristics of the Pacific War, the exhibit, as planned in January, would discuss in depth the decision to develop and use atomic bombs, the two bombing missions, the effects on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the legacy of the event throughout the world. Portions of the exhibit would consider a series of “historical controversies”: Was a warning or demonstration of the bomb possible? Was an invasion inevitable if the atomic bomb had not been dropped? Was the decision to drop the bomb justified? The exhibit would also discuss the beginning of the nuclear arms race and the threat of nuclear war.

Of perhaps greatest significance were plans to incorporate extensive photographs, artifacts, and discussion relating to the bombing’s effects on Hiroshima and Nagasaki residents. So graphic are some of these images and descriptions that the January exhibit script began by urging parental discretion for young children. Plans called for displaying a schoolgirl’s lunchbox containing peas and rice reduced to carbon, photographs of flash-burn victims, and disturbing testimony from survivors on the loss of loved ones.

The AFA stated that the January exhibit plans contained “major concessions to balance” lacking in previous versions. Still, the organization found an overly sympathetic attitude toward Japan’s plight. *Air Force Magazine* Editor in Chief John T. Correll found one sentence particularly objectionable: “For most Americans, it was a war of vengeance. For most Japanese, it was a war to defend their unique culture against Western imperialism.” As a whole, Correll concluded, the exhibit “emphasizes the military aggressiveness of the United States and minimizes the aggressiveness of Japan.”

A section called “A Fight to the Finish” in these plans described “Japanese expansionism . . . marked by naked aggression and extreme brutality,” including the 1937 slaughter of tens of thousands of Chinese in Nanking. The script also refers to such atrocities wrought by Japanese troops as forced labor and biological experiments on

human victims. But when Correll tallied images in the script, he found 49 photos of Japanese casualties, as compared to three photos of American casualties; 25 photos of Japanese women, children, and religious objects harmed by the blast; and 11 aggressive, anti-Japanese statements by Americans, as compared to one aggressive, anti-American statement by the Japanese.

Thomas Crouch, chairman of the museum's department of aeronautics, says that exhibit planners have tried to tell the whole story. "We're looking at a turning point in this part of the century," he says. "We're encouraging visitors to think about what [the bombing] means." The museum, he says, neither wanted to sidestep the difficult issues raised by atomic bombing nor depict the Japanese as innocent victims. *Bockscar*, the airplane that dropped the bomb on Nagasaki, is currently on display at the U.S. Air Force Museum in Ohio, and Crouch says treatment of the bomb there is limited. "This is an attempt to move beyond that," he says. On the other hand, the Air and Space Museum did not want to echo museum exhibits in Hiroshima that imply "the bomb dropped out of the clear blue sky one day," curator Michael Neufeld says. "There's no historic context of the war."

An exhibit advisory committee including some World War II veterans had approved of the January script, Crouch says. Nonetheless, the Air and Space Museum did make some changes this summer, largely in response to veterans' complaints. The "core of the exhibit remains the same," Crouch says, but it places more emphasis on Japanese aggression and atrocities at the beginning of the war and won't use as many gruesome bomb casualty photos. The title of the exhibit has been changed from "The Crossroads: The End of World War II, the Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War" to "The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II." The exhibit as currently planned is fair, Neufeld says: "It doesn't celebrate the bombing, and it doesn't condemn the bombing."

The AFA, however, is still not satisfied. "The changes consist of point additions and deletions that do not, in the aggregate, shift the mass of the



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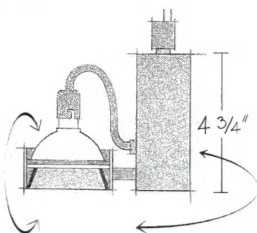
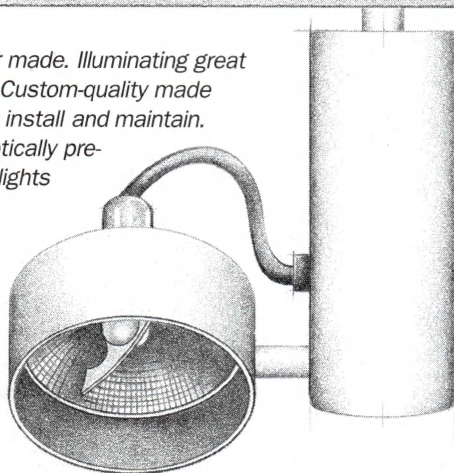


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exhibit appreciably," the AFA's Correll concluded in a June report. "It is still a partisan interpretation that I believe many Americans—and most veterans—will find objectionable." Museum officials, Correll said, "have seemed reluctant to accept the explanation that [the bombing] was a military action, taken to end the war and save lives."

Some veterans would prefer that the *Enola Gay* be exhibited by itself with only basic information about its former use. "I suggest that the *Enola Gay* be preserved and displayed properly, and alone, for all the world to see," its command pilot, Paul W. Tibbetts (who named the bomber after his mother), said in a speech this June at the Airmen Memorial Museum in Suitland, Md. "She should be presented as a peace keeper and as the harbinger of a Cold War kept from going 'hot.'" Exhibit planners say that others have demanded that the museum show no photographs of the bomb's aftermath in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

For museum officials, however, such suggestions are not viable. Visitors have come to expect the "positive reinforcement" of American aerospace endeavors, Crouch says. Traditionally, the Air and Space Museum has been a "pat-on-the-back kind of building," he says. "We have always done that kind of thing very well." But it's impossible not to delve into the complexity of such issues as atomic bombing, he says: "There just isn't any reasonable way you could do this exhibit without people being uncomfortable."

—Susannah Cassedy O'Donnell

Owning the Bones

When Simon Andre Pentzien of Neuss, Germany, read in the newspaper that a museum in the U.S. was selling dinosaur bones, he promptly drafted a letter to the Museum of Paleontology at the University of California at Berkeley.

"I am 8 years old and love dinosaurs," he wrote. "Would you please be so kind and send me one tooth of T-Rex? This is my greatest wish." The staff at the museum was unable to mail Simon an actual tooth

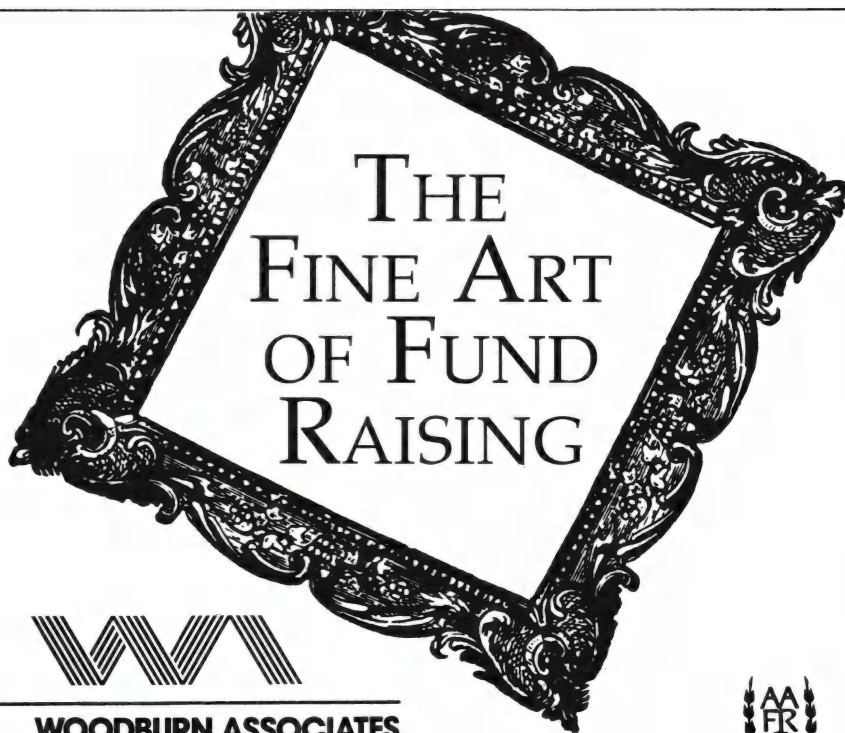
from their newly acquired Cretaceous cast but they helped him sponsor one as part of a fund drive to defray the cost of the \$80,000 Tyrannosaurus Rex replica. The skeleton will be exhibited in the museum's new Valley Life Sciences Building.

The "Own a Piece of the Rex" campaign, begun in the spring of this year, allows participants to sponsor parts of the 40-foot skeleton, to be assembled early this fall. Donors can spend between \$20 for a chevron tail bone and \$5,000 for the honor of owning the skull and jaws of the carnivore. According to Judy Scotchmoor, the museum's public activities coordinator, the most popular bones are the reasonably priced chevrons, the \$50 toes and claws, and the \$25 teeth, all of which may be sponsored by an unlimited number of donors. Those with T-Rex-sized budgets may prefer to invest in the \$2,500 pelvis or the \$750 femur (one of the giant leg bones). Bones such as these, which are priced over \$100, may be sponsored only one time.

Scotchmoor admits that the Berkeley museum was not the first to conduct this type of fund raiser. "I'd like to say the idea is an original one, but it's not," she said. "Other museums have done it in the past."

The Field Museum of Chicago held an "Own a Bone" campaign from April to December of 1993. It was "wildly successful," according to Rodger Patience, the Field's coordinator for development and external affairs. Donors sponsored a total of 8,600 bones of a Brachiosaurus, generating \$135,620—one third of the cost of erecting the largest mounted dinosaur skeleton in the world. "Own a Bone" received an award from AAM's Development and Membership Committee for the finest fund-raising campaign of 1993. In addition, the Field gained 89 new individual and family memberships from campaign participants.

The Berkeley cast is a replica of a T-Rex skeleton discovered in Montana in 1991, now housed at the Museum of the Rockies at Montana State University in Bozeman. It is one of the most complete ever unearthed of Tyrannosaurus Rex, who roamed what is now the central
(Please turn to M Notes, page 27)



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Electric Dreams

BY SUSANNAH CASSEDY O'DONNELL

To Mr. and Mrs. Jim Stafford, Jr., 4602 Homestead Drive in Prairie Village, Kans., was home from 1954 to 1977. And to Marty and Patti Bauer, it was home for the past couple of years. To the nearby Johnson County Museum of History, however, the 1950s suburban house has become something more: a vehicle for teaching visitors about an important part of American history.

Earlier this year, the Bauers moved from Prairie Village and donated their home to the museum, making the Johnson County Museums the first cultural institution in the U.S. to preserve and interpret a home from that era. Eventually the house will be part of a new permanent exhibit, tentatively scheduled to open in 1998, on how families sought the "good life" in Johnson County from 1820-1990. A major portion of the exhibit will examine the American dream of a house in the suburbs. The two-bedroom ranch house is one of the "superartifacts of the modern period," says Thomas Frye, exhibit consultant and Oakland Museum history curator, because it reveals a wealth of information on middle-class family values and aspirations.

Like so many American suburbs, Prairie Village boomed after the end of World War II, quickly becoming a bedroom community for Kansas City, Mo. While Johnson County was evolving by the turn of the century from an agricul-

tural community into a suburban haven for the wealthy and upper-middle class, it took several decades and major sociological change to

attract droves of young, middle-class families. By 1950, there were 980 homes in Prairie Village, which received the National Association of Home Builders' Award for the "best planned community development" in the United States. Large ranch houses on broad, tree-lined streets were—and still are—home to a predominantly white, middle-class population.

The house now sitting in the museum's backyard looks a lot like its former neighbors: the frame structure has a partial brick veneer on the facade and a two-car attached garage. What makes it unique, however, is its origin. In 1953, Kansas City Power & Light (KCPL) built the house for \$55,434 as a model home for research and exhibition. Even after the house closed to the public and the Staffords moved in, the electric company continued to monitor the electric heat pump for two years. In return, Jim Stafford, an employee of KCPL, received a discount on his electric bills.

"Your doorway to tomorrow . . . to better living today the electric way!" trumpeted an electric company newsletter announcing the opening of the first all-electric home in the Kansas City area. Visitors were lining up outside the model home "despite blustery weather," the publication reported, to get a look at "electric residential luxury." A family of five fortunate enough to be the 60,000th visitors were treated to a pri-



The 60,000th visitor to the Kansas City area's first all-electric model home was treated to a complimentary set of kitchen appliances.

vate tour and a complimentary set of electric kitchen appliances.

An array of convenience features in the model home, all electrically powered, were intended to show middle-class families how "happier and more healthful living" was promoted by modern technology. "The interpretation won't be that this is typical," says Janet Bruce Campbell, director of the Johnson County Museums. "This is the dream—this is what people aspired to."

A ceiling spotlight in the dining room could simulate candlelight, an electronic eye operated "moonglow lighting" on floors at night, an electric opener could control the garage door from 200 feet away, and the bathroom boasted "built-in germicidal and fluorescent sunlamps." The electric company boasted that the kitchen was "scientifically arranged to provide time-saving steps and the greatest convenience," offering such modern features as a garbage disposal and indoor grill. The woman of the house could even monitor which lamps and appliances were in use throughout the house

thanks to a special panel installed in the kitchen.

The original furniture, too, was chosen because it was considered "progressive and modern in thinking," Campbell says. The Kansas City department store, Emery, Bird, Thayer, furnished the home when it was open to the public. An inventory list donated to the museum describes an array of carefully selected items, right down to the utensils in the kitchen and the tools in the garage. The model home boasted a streamlined couch and chairs, a built-in Sylvania radio, two paintings (a "sea scene" and a "rustic scene"), a brass smoking stand, 76 books, a set of the 1953 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and two sterling silver compotes.

While museum staff members have not yet been able to locate these original furnishings, they plan to work with the family of the original owners in their search for similar objects. The community at large will also be involved in a collection drive and in the museum's effort to describe the neighborhood as it functioned four decades ago.

This summer, the house traveled about 12 miles from Prairie Village to the museum's grounds in Shawnee. There, it will open to visitors as a historic house museum, probably before the permanent exhibit makes its debut. Through guided tours of the home, Campbell says, visitors will be able to consider two important questions: "What is the American dream?" and "How close does reality come to that dream?"

When many people think of the 1950s, she says, they think of "Leave It to Beaver," the popular television show that depicted the "perfect" American family. The museum, however, will be careful to stress that life in the 1950s suburbs was not always so idyllic.

"There was a real undercurrent of discontent," she says. "The suburbs were often based on racial exclusion, and many women were put into a lifestyle that wasn't fulfilling to them."

Like the bevy of modern electric appliances in the model home, Ward and June Cleaver, she says, were just an ideal. **M**

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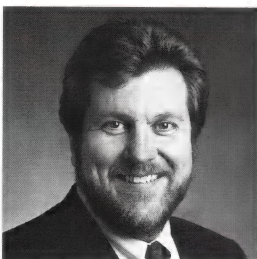
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James C. Rees to resident director, Historic Mount Vernon, Mount Vernon, Va.

Roberta F. King to director of community relations, Grand Rapids Art Museum, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Michelle Crow-Dolby to historical agency consultant, Local History Office, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus.

Dennis Power to director, Oakland Museum of California.

Pat Purnell to director of education and exhibits, Children's Museum of Memphis.



Janice Cooper to supervisor of council programs/development associate, New England Aquarium, Boston.

Steven J. Himmelrich to director of institutional advancement, Baltimore City Life Museums.

Ed Merrell to executive director, Olmstead County Historical Society, Rochester, Minn.

Ross G. Randall to deputy director for public relations and development, Gunston Hall Plantation, Mason Neck, Va.

Phelan Reed Fretz to vice president for the museum and public programs, Academy of Natural Sciences Museum, Philadelphia.

Domenic J. Iacono to associate director, University Art Collection, Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y.

Kathleen T. Harleman to associate director, Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Wellesley College, Wellesley, Mass.

Obituary:

Mark E. Ouderkirk died of lung cancer on May 27, 1994. He was 37 years old. Mr. Ouderkirk was manager of art collections for the Museum of the City of New York. He was previously registrar of the Hudson River Museum and assistant director of the Plaza Gallery of the State University of New York in Albany.

Please send personnel information to Susannah Cassidy O'Donnell, Associate Editor, Museum News, AAM, 1225 Eye St. N.W., Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005.

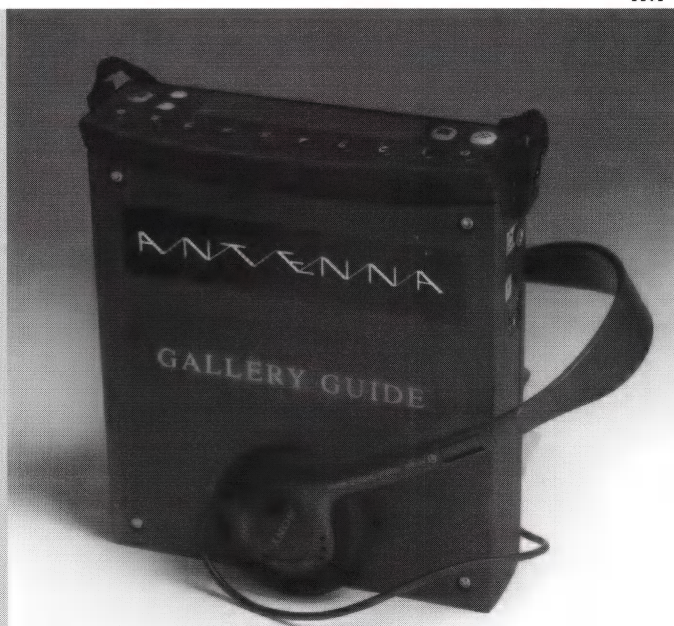
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Calendar



Gauguin and the School of Pont-Aven

A small river port village in Brittany known for its cool climate, picturesque landscape, and friendly inhabitants willing to pose in traditional dress, Pont-Aven attracted artists from eight countries toward the end of the 19th century. The most famous of these, Paul

Gauguin, developed his vibrant Impressionist style there before leaving for the South Seas. The exhibition features 111 works by 21 artists—paintings, sculpture, drawings, and works on paper. The exhibit was organized by the San Diego Museum of Art.

Through October 23,

1994:
Indianapolis Museum of Art

November 19-January 15, 1995:
Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore

February 11-April 9, 1995:
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

May 6-July 2, 1995:

Dixon Gallery & Gardens, Memphis

July 29-September 24, 1995:
San Diego Museum of Art

American Impressionism and Realism: The Painting of Modern Life, 1885-1915

Two traditions of

American painting—Impressionism and Realism—characterize the course of art in the late 19th and early 20th century. Both are firmly rooted in European Academic and Impressionist soil. Organized thematically on three subject areas prominent in the art of both camps—the country, the city, and



Opposite: Emile Bernard, *The Buckwheat Harvest* (1888). An example of the genre that developed in Pont-Aven in the late 1800s.

Above: William Merritt Chase, *Idle Hours* (c. 1894). From "American Impressionism and Realism: The Painting of Modern Life, 1885-1915."

Below: Karl Kipp Copper, *Fern Dish* (c. 1910). One of 184 decorative arts objects on display in "Head, Heart and Hand."

the home—the exhibit aligns representatives of both approaches for visitors to gauge similarities and differences. The exhibit includes work by John Singer Sargent, Mary Cassatt, William Merritt Chase, Childe Hassam, Robert Henri, John Sloan, William Glackens, and George Bellows.

Through October 30, 1994:
Amon Carter Museum,
Fort Worth, Tex.

December 3-February 5, 1995:
The Denver Art
Museum

March 12-May 14, 1995:
Los Angeles County
Museum of Art

Head, Heart and Hand: Elbert Hubbard and the Roycrofters

Elbert Hubbard left his mark on the history of U.S. publishing and decorative arts by founding Roycroft, an Arts and Crafts colony in Aurora, N.Y., and promoting its products to middle-class consumers. Inspired by the crafts ethos of William Morris in England, whose Kelmscott Press and crafts center he visited in 1894, Hubbard oversaw until his death a thriving enterprise and tourist inn. "Head, Heart and Hand," includes 194 examples of furniture, books, tooled leather, metalcraft, and artworks. Organized by the

Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester and the American Federation of Arts, the exhibit traces the history of the Roycrofters from its origins at the turn of the century until its demise during the Depression.



October 29-January 8, 1995:

Memorial Art Gallery
of the University of
Rochester, N.Y.

January 28-March 26, 1995:

Akron Art Museum,
Ohio

April 23-June 25, 1995:

Allentown Art
Museum, Allentown,
Pa.

July 28-September 24, 1995:

Frederick R. Weisman
Museum of Art,
Pepperdine University,
Malibu, Calif.

Herter Brothers: Furniture and Interiors for a Gilded Age

When Gustave and Christian Herter arrived in New York in 1848 they brought with them the guild-formed traditions of European cabinetmaking. The two proceeded to adapt them to the tastes and materials of the United States. Taking advantage of the transportation advances of the

Industrial Revolution, they created a number of landmark interiors for William H. Vanderbilt and J. Pierpont Morgan. Matching decor with function, they produced Renaissance-style dining rooms, Louis XIV-era drawing rooms, and smoking rooms in a Turkish vein. The exhibit places their work in the context of the history of interior design, the fine furniture trade in New York, the relationships between designer and patron, and aspects of business history such as market, factory, employee, and labor issues.

Through October 2, 1995:

The Museum of Fine
Arts, Houston

December 13-February 12, 1995:

High Museum of Art,
Atlanta

March 15-July 9, 1995:
Metropolitan Museum
of Art, New York



Left: Hendrick Goltzius, *The Great Standard Bearer* (1587). From "Masterpieces of Renaissance and Baroque Printmaking."

Opposite: The Atrax spider is one of 34,000 identified species of spiders on earth.

Masterpieces of Renaissance and Baroque Printmaking from the Collections of Gertrude Weber and the Bayly Art Museum, University of Virginia

Surveying European printmaking from its inception in the 15th century through the 17th century, "Masterpieces" demonstrates the considerable technical advances and stylistic changes made in the 250-year period. The

169 woodcuts, engravings, and etchings on display include works by Albrecht Dürer, Rembrandt, and Anthony van Dyck. The exhibit groups the prints according to the medium used, working methods employed, and artistic schools and themes. Organized by the Trust for Museum Exhibitions, Washington, D.C., the exhibit also highlights the influence of

Northern developments on Italian work.

Through October 2, 1994:
The Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Va.

October 28-January 2, 1995:
Hofstra Museum, Hempstead, N.Y.

February 4-March 19, 1995:
The Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Portland, Oreg.

April 14-May 28, 1995:
Elizabeth Meyers Mitchell Art Gallery at St. Johns College, Annapolis, Md.

George Inness: Presence of the Unseen

When George Inness settled in Montclair, N.J., in 1878, helping to turn the town into an artists' colony, he blazed a path of American landscape painting that viewed scenes of nature as powerful evocations of romantic themes and embodiments of spiritual truths linking heaven and earth. Influenced by European traditions—Titian and Claude Lorrain on the one hand and contemporary French Barbizon School painting on the other—Inness rendered natural forms in a way that emphasized atmospherics and treatment over realistic detail. The exhibit includes 21 paintings, two watercolors, and one etching, as well as the artist's paraphernalia and correspondence.

September 11-November 6, 1994:
The Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, N.J.

November 20-January 8, 1995:
Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, N.Y.

February 3-March 17, 1995:
Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, South Hadley, Mass.

Summer 1995:
The Hudson River Museum of Westchester, Yonkers, N.Y.

Hunters of the Sky

Birds of prey (or raptors) have taken a firm hold on the human imagination, figuring prominently in art, literature, and social custom as symbols of power and majesty on the one hand and as scavengers and killers on the other. "Hunters of the Sky" examines the ecological niche raptors inhabit, their physiology and habits, and discusses their cultural interpretation from ancient times to the present. Four species are singled out for special attention because of the controversy over their conservation in the last decade—the bald eagle, northern spotted owl, peregrine falcon, and California condor. "Hunters of the Sky" will tour until 1998.

November 12-April 16, 1995:

Science Museum of Minnesota, St. Paul

June 2-September 4, 1995:

Museum of Discovery and Science, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

September 29-January 7, 1996:

Museum of Science, Boston

February 2-May 5, 1996:

Denver Museum of Natural History

Spiders!

Scientists estimate the earth contains 170,000 species of spiders; probably every home has at least one. Of these only 34,000 species have been identified. The goal of

the exhibit is to give visitors a spider's point of view on finding food, mating, reproducing, finding shelter, and fending off danger. The exhibit features a fiber-optic light sculpture, videos, live and mounted specimens, as well as prose, poetry, and spider myths to impart understanding of the biological role of the eight-legged creatures.

Through January 2, 1995:

National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

March 11-June 4, 1995:

American Museum of

Natural History, New York

July 1-September 24, 1995:

Cranbrook Museum, Detroit

Alone in a Crowd: Prints by African-American Artists of the 1930s-40s from the Collection of Reba and Dave Williams

As part of the New Deal economic recovery plan, the Work Progress Administration's Federal Arts Project sponsored neighborhood art centers that provided African-American artists access to printmaking facilities. The work produced during this era built on the suc-

cesses of the Harlem Renaissance in giving visual form to the black experience as interpreted by African-American artists. Organized by the Newark Museum and circulated by the American Federation of Arts, "Alone in the Crowd" features more than 100 prints by 45 black artists. The work offers candid views of rural and urban life, social injustice, and cultural identity.

Through September 4, 1994:

J.B. Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Ky.

October 9-December 4, 1994:

Philadelphia Museum of Art

January 4-February 26, 1995:

Baltimore Museum of Art

March 26-May 21, 1995:

Gibbes Museum of Art, Charleston, S.C.

June 18-August 13, 1995:

Bass Museum of Art, Miami

September 10-

November 5, 1995:

Arkansas Art Center, Little Rock

To See the Sea: The Underwater Vision of Al Giddings

One of the world's premier underwater photographers, Al Giddings, has documented a part of nature that few have

seen firsthand. Using dramatic video footage, photo murals, artifacts, and hands-on exhibits, Oakland Museum planners present visitors with a multisensory experience of undersea voyage as well as ecological implications of marine exploration. Objects on display include a Russian research submersible and remotely operated vehicle, diving suits, the jaws of an Orca or killer whale, and a Great White Shark.

Through September 5: Oregon Coast Aquarium, Newport

September 24-January 8, 1995:

The Oakland Museum, Oakland, Calif.

November 3-February 28, 1996:

The Shedd Aquarium, Chicago **M**



Correction: "Edgar Degas: The Many Dimensions of a Master French Impressionist," listed in the July/August Calendar, was co-organized by The Dayton Art Institute and the Center for the Fine Arts, Miami, with the collaboration of the Mississippi Museum of Art.

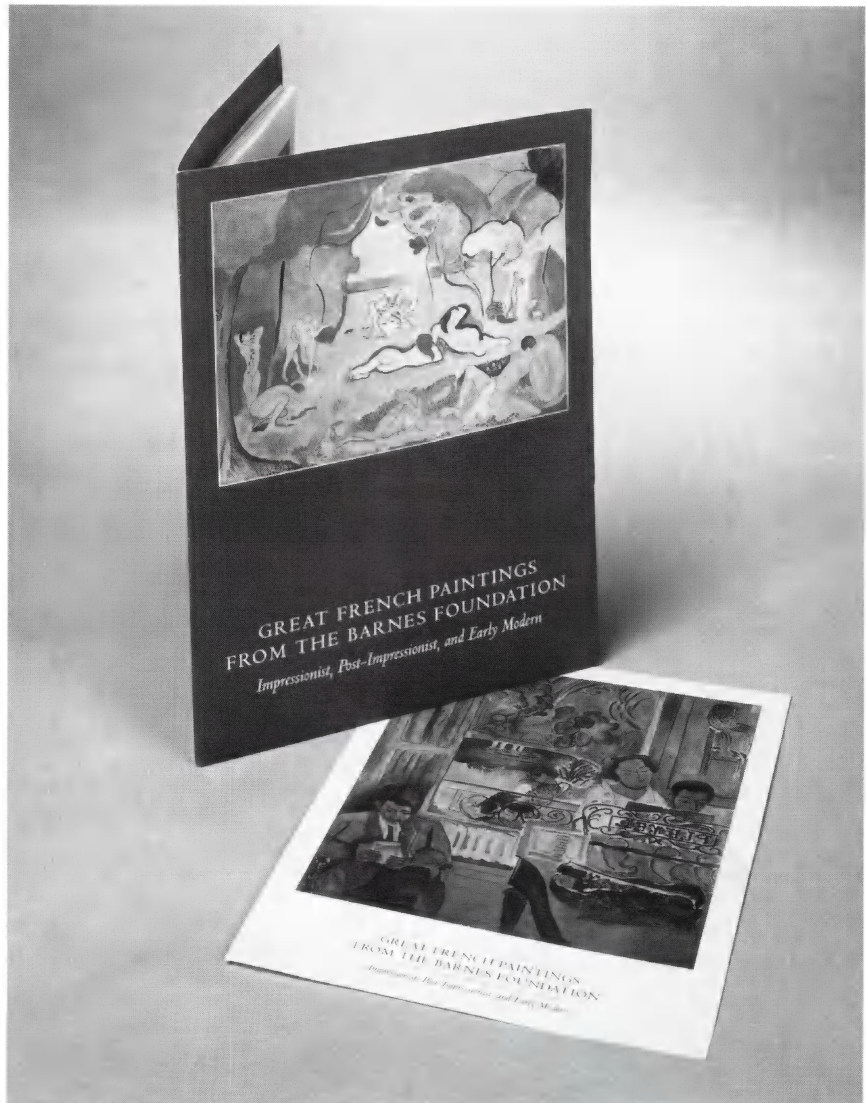
The AMIE Awards

BY GAIL C. GRIFFIN

Museum marketing activities are gaining importance as institutions increasingly realize how vital a role they play in an institution's success. To provide a showcase for outstanding efforts in this area, the AAM Public Relations and Marketing Committee created the Awards for Marketing Institutional Excellence (AMIE). The AMIEs are presented at the AAM annual meeting to honor those museums that developed and implemented exemplary marketing programs during the previous year.

Awards are given in four categories: awareness building, attendance generation, crisis management, and merchandising excellence.

Applicants in each of the four award categories are divided according to their annual institutional operating budget: large (\$500,000 or more); medium (\$250,000-\$499,999); and small (less than \$250,000). A panel of marketing professionals from within and outside the museum community judges the entries and assigns 25 percent of their evaluation to planning, 35 percent to execution, and 40 percent to results. Judges for the 1994 competition were Jack Faris, senior vice president, Cole and Weber, Seattle; David Resnicow, president, Resnicow Schroeder Associates, Inc., New York; and Sondra Thorson, director, development, membership, and public affairs, The Adler Planetarium, Chicago.



Golden AMIE:

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., for "Great French Paintings from the Barnes Foundation: Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, and Early Modern." The gallery developed a crisis-management plan in response to intense criticism appearing in the national media several months before the exhibit opened. Main components included a

campaign to educate the media and the public about the foundation, the exhibition, and the conditions under which the art would travel, and assembling a corps of experts who could address issues relating to the controversy. Press coverage of the exhibit debut was virtually all positive, and public response was enthusiastic.

**Silver AMIE for attendance
generation (large institution):**

Cheney Cowles Museum, Spokane, Wash., for "A Sumptuous Past: 17th Century Dutch and Flemish Painters." The museum used the title "dutchTreat" to describe the exhibitions taking place in conjunction with the major show. Other activities, such as corporate evenings, carried out the theme with titles like "Mingle with the Masters." Visitation was double what the museum had hoped for.

**Silver AMIE for attendance
generation (medium institution):**

Ansel Adams Center for Photography, San Francisco, for "Annie Leibovitz: Photographs 1970-1990." The center publicized the exhibition using bus shelter posters, posters in restaurants, a special reception for young professionals, a press preview, public service announcements, and an announcement on train platforms. Five times as many people visited than during the same period the previous year.

**Silver AMIE for awareness building
(large institution):**

Art Institute of Chicago for ARTEX-PRESS, a program to bring art into downtown businesses through lunch-time slide presentations. The flexible program accommodated varying organizational needs and offered a variety of topics so it could be repeated at the same businesses. Museum visibility increased among downtown workers, and many individuals who enjoyed ARTEXPRESS presentations visited the museum.

**Silver AMIE for awareness building
(small institution):**

Laurel Historical Society for creating a video depicting the history of Laurel, Md., where the institution is located. The video premiered to a standing-room-only crowd, was borrowed by numerous local organizations, and was purchased by more than 200 individuals. It is now available in schools and libraries, shown on local cable television, and used as an orientation to museum exhibitions. Response to the

project convinced state legislators to approve a bond for completion of the museum.

**Silver AMIE for merchandising
excellence (large institution):**

Nine Arizona museums (Arizona State Museum, The Heard Museum, Center for Creative Photography, Museum of Art, Museum of Northern Arizona, Phoenix Art Museum, Scottsdale Center for the Arts, Tucson Museum of Art, and University Art Museum) who collaborated with Pure Art USA, Inc., to produce T-shirts featuring southwestern art from their collections. The shirts were sold in all the museums' stores; in displays in Pure Art's retail outlets; through a Japanese trading company; and at a shopping center popular with tourists. Sales promotions such as having all frontline staff wear the shirts helped the collaboration succeed. **M**

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Noteworthy



A bear Shadakokh (crest hat), made by a Chilkat Tlingit artist of the Northwest Alaska Coast during the 19th century. On display in "Creation's Journey: Masterworks of Native American Identity and Belief," one of three inaugural exhibitions opening in October at the Smithsonian's George Gustav Heye Center, National Museum of the American Indian, New York.

The Heye Center, National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, opens in New York City in October. The center occupies the first and second floors of a newly renovated historic landmark, the Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House in lower Manhattan. The museum will devote approximately 20,000 square feet to exhibition galleries and public spaces, including two museum shops, a resource center, and two education workshop rooms. The Native American Expressive Culture series, which includes dance and music, a powwow, poetry readings and theater performances, will accompany three inaugural exhibitions featuring 500 of the collection's one million artifacts. The collection includes 517,533 archaeological objects and 151,583 ethnological objects from virtually every state in the U.S., each Canadian province, Mexico, Greenland, and every country of Central and South America and the Caribbean.

The Baltimore Museum of Art opens its New Wing for Modern Art in October, housing 16 new galleries for the permanent collection of painting and sculpture. The \$10-million, 35,000-square-foot wing will provide the first single, permanent place in the museum, and in the state of Maryland, for the public to view 20th-century art. The museum's collection includes the renowned Cone Collection of works by Matisse, Picasso, Van Gogh, and Cézanne, in addition to holdings that trace the course of abstraction in modern art.

Winterthur in Winterthur, Del., opens the

Thomas A. Graves, Jr. Gallery in September. The 3,700-square-foot gallery, designed to house temporary exhibitions, will feature shows from Winterthur's own collections and from other institutions. The Graves Gallery is the last of three new exhibition spaces to open at Winterthur and will house "Eye for Excellence: Masterworks from Winterthur" until January. The exhibit is a subjective exploration of the question, "What makes a masterpiece?" and features objects considered to be "the best of the best" at the museum.

The Exploratorium in San Francisco

opened "The Exploratorium Exhibition China" at the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History in Beijing this summer. The \$1.5-million exhibition includes 63 interactive exhibits that explore light, optics, sound, electricity, and other natural phenomena. The exhibition will occupy 28,300 square feet of space and will be accessible to over 1 million people daily. "The Exploratorium Exhibition China" is the fourth major exhibition commissioned from the Exploratorium by international organizations and governments, including those in Paris and Japan. It will remain in Beijing for almost three

months and then travel to five cities over a three-year period.

Houston Museum of Natural Science

opened the Cockerell Butterfly Center this summer. The three-story, truncated glass cone was designed and constructed to depict the rain forests and the Sacred Wells of the Maya found in the Yucatan area of Mexico and in Central America. The 10,000-square-foot greenhouse includes limestone caves, tropical flora, a 40-foot waterfall, and thousands of live butterflies. The exhibit is expected to attract 6,000 visitors per day and is the first in this country to display live butterflies in a

rain forest setting.

The Mint Museum of Art

in Charlotte, N.C., reopens its European collection to the public this summer, after a nine-month hiatus. Six European art galleries were closed last year to make room for a temporary exhibition. The collection spans the 16th through the 19th centuries and celebrates the role of the artist in society. Though the museum has reconfigured its European wing, it continues to integrate its ceramics collection and other three-dimensional works of art into the main galleries for public viewing. **M**

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Dead Reckoning

BY SUSANNAH CASSEDY O'DONNELL

Not too long ago in this country, many a child would utter a familiar refrain before slipping under the covers: "If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take."

To contemporary ears, these words may sound morbid. But in an age before the discovery of antibiotics and other medicinal advances, a simple infection could easily kill a youngster before daybreak. Death was a common, if unwelcome, visitor during the 19th century, and people devised often intricate and formal ways to prepare for and cope with its frequent intrusions. In modern American society, where life expectancy is much higher, people's relationship with death has changed dramatically.

These differences are the focus of "Memory and Mourning: American Expressions of Grief," currently on display at the Strong Museum in Rochester, N.Y. The exhibit, which will travel for several years beginning in 1995, contrasts American attitudes toward death in two major time periods: 1850 to 1920 and 1920 to 1993. Nearly 200 objects show visitors how people have grieved for and remembered the dead before and during modern times.

The cornerstone and major inspiration for the exhibit is the Walter Johnson Collection—some 600 mourning-related artifacts acquired by the Strong Museum in 1988. About 90 percent of



Coffee mugs commemorating the late James Dean and Elvis Presley (1991) and a photograph of a grieving woman (c. 1860); examples of how American attitudes toward death have changed since the 19th century.



the collection is comprised of post-mortem photographs—a common way of commemorating the dead during the last century. Other objects include books, funeral wreaths, memorial cards, and jewelry. "The collection presented very interesting challenges for exhibitry," says Vice President for Research and Interpretation Scott G.

Eberle. "How do you show these without making people run screaming from the room? How can you convey this 19th-century sensibility to people whose emotional construct is entirely different?"

To help answer such questions, the museum assembled a community advisory committee that included grief counselors, college professors who teach courses on death and dying, funeral directors, clergy, and social workers. At meetings beginning in 1989, the committee considered how best to present the range of sensitive issues raised by the topic of death.

One suggestion: so people won't be shocked by the exhibit content, prepare them before they even set foot into display areas. The exhibit's opening coincided with a public conference called "Of Life and Loss," which helped health care professionals, caregivers, and the general public develop ways of understanding and coping with loss. The entrance to the exhibit, too, is designed to give the visitor a clear sense of what is to follow. Flanked by flower arrange-

ments, a block of faux marble resembling a mausoleum wall is engraved with these words: "This exhibit is about the ways Americans remember their dead. It does not teach how to feel or act, but it shows ways others have coped."

Visitors who feel they can handle the difficult subject then enter "Expectations, Experiences, Explanations," the first of four major sections. Here, they learn about how declining infant mortality and rising life expectancy have affected people's attitudes toward death. "The closer you get to the present, the more predictability there is about death," Eberle explains. Images and artifacts demonstrate how constant threats of untimely death such as epidemic disease, war, and accidents shaped 19th-century Americans' expectations for their lives. One letter-writer in 1878 casually describes a child's reaction to a newborn sibling: "Willie is greatly delighted with the new baby, he says he would not have it die for five hundred dollars." A contemporary AIDS poster helps illustrate society's

more recent encounter with fatal illness and early death.

"Coping With Loss," the second exhibit section, explores some of the major differences in mourning before and after 1920—a time the museum identifies as the approximate dawn of the modern age.

Here, visitors may contemplate an array of objects from a time when people felt more need for connection with the dead—and a need to demonstrate that connection. Ornately framed post-mortem photographs depict women dressed in black who sit solemnly at the bedside of a deceased sibling or child. "Why would someone want a picture like this?" the exhibit asks visitors who may find such photos morbid and bizarre. "Try to think why photographs like this one comforted mourners in the past. . . ."

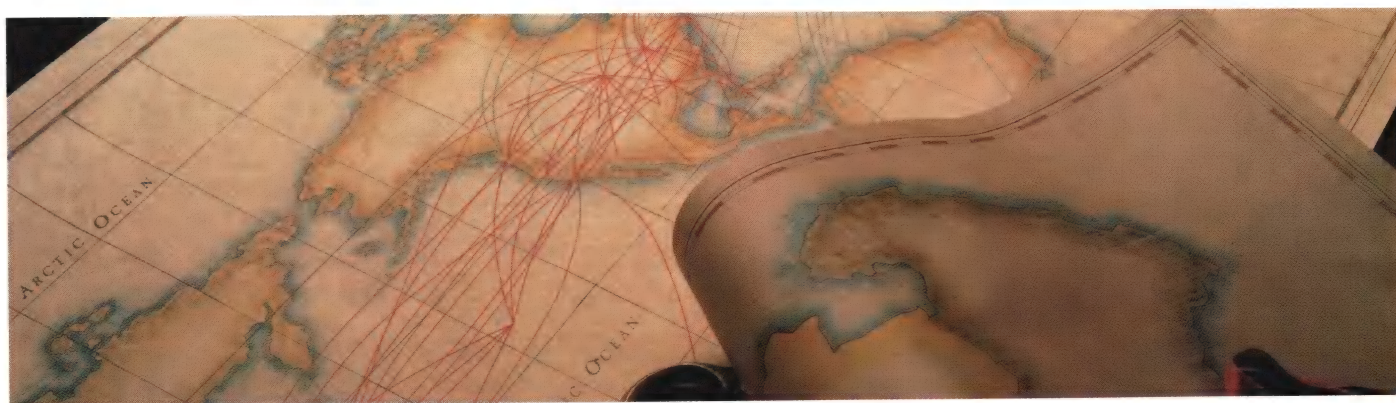
By contrast, the exhibit shows how modern Americans deal with death. "We have a much different consciousness now," Eberle says.

Because death is less familiar, people nowadays tend to have fewer rituals for

mourning. A woman's elaborate mourning costume from 1887 is displayed next to a light-blue dress one museum staff member wore to her father's funeral in 1979. During the 19th century women were expected to wear exclusively—and sometimes for several years—special black clothes following a family member's death; the museum employee wore the same dress to work occasionally as she would any other outfit.

Other artifacts demonstrate contemporary efforts to trivialize death through glib or macabre humor: one T-shirt pronounces "Die Yuppie Scum" in block letters, and a movie poster for "Revenge of the Dead" features a "living corpse" rising from the street, eyeballs protruding and claw-like hands grasping.

Less affected by social conditions are "The Emotions of Grief," the focus of the exhibit's third section. Visitors wend their way through tombstone-shaped panels and beneath red banners proclaiming some of the feelings mourners may have: shock, longing,



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denial, anger, guilt, and sorrow. Suggesting the random way these emotions manifest themselves, the museum-goer's path through this exhibit section is not prescribed. Illustrating some people's experiences with these emotions are first-person quotes and photographs. The famous image of a recently widowed and dazed Jacqueline Kennedy at LBJ's swearing-in, for example, is a classic example of shock in the aftermath of unexpected, violent death.

It is nearly impossible, Eberle says, for someone to go through the exhibit without a personal reaction—missing someone who has died, thinking of someone who is gravely ill, or recalling a painful period of grief. For this reason, the exhibit concludes with a quiet, private space—a resource center for contemplation and “decompression.” Visitors may record some of their own memories in a notebook or browse

Here, visitors may contemplate an array of objects from a time when people felt more need for connection with the dead—and a need to demonstrate that connection

through brochures on local grief counseling programs.

Here, the exhibit also discusses the most recent evolution of American attitudes toward death. By the 1980s, Eberle says, people had begun dealing more frankly and directly with death. Thanks in large part to recent psychological study of death and dying, discussions of such topics are no longer so taboo, he says, nor is society as obsessed with the conquest of death as it was in the mid-20th century.

From reading visitors' testimonies in the resource center notebook, it's clear that “people have powerful experiences

in the exhibit,” Eberle says. Anecdotal evidence suggests that people have come to the exhibit specifically because they were currently grieving the loss of a loved one.

He says that few people have been horribly shocked or offended by the exhibit content (with the exception of one visitor who became convinced there was a real corpse in the body bag on display).

While the exhibit does not glorify a time when death dominated life, the museum believes it is nonetheless valuable to educate visitors about 19th-century methods of accepting death and commemorating the deceased.

“Memory and Mourning,” Eberle says, “encourages people to think more systematically about the role death has played in their life.” That very process, the exhibit suggests, may ease some of death's painful burden on the living. **M**

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(*M notes, continued from page 9*)

U.S. 65 million years ago. The \$34,000 cast arrived without assembly instructions at the Berkeley museum in a crate containing 300 pieces. An already-assembled skeleton would have run close to \$80,000, the cost of the museum's entire T-Rex project. Construction of the exhibit in a three-story atrium in the new building will take approximately three months to complete. The 18-foot-high skeleton will be mounted on a concealed steel support and surrounded by a spiral staircase.

Displaying a replica of the T-rex skeleton rather than the actual fossils gives the museum the freedom to choose a more realistic pose for their dinosaur. While the dinosaur must look natural and fit in the building, it must also be seismically safe because the museum is located in a region prone to earthquakes.

The tax-deductible donations will subsidize the preparation, shipping, and mounting of the T-rex cast. The funds will also aid the museum in its construction of a surrounding exhibit area,

which will include computers and an interactive learning center. In return for their support of the exhibit, donors' names will appear on a permanent plaque displayed near the T-rex cast, and they will receive a personalized certificate of appreciation and an invitation to a special dedication ceremony to be held after the exhibit's completion.

The "Own a Piece of the Rex" campaign has been successful thus far, with more than 140 individual donations from 15 states and Germany totaling close to \$10,000. Scotchmoor even plans to contact Steven Spielberg about sponsoring a part of T-rex.

Many of the donors purchased the bones as gifts for occasions like birthdays and graduations. One woman, who earned her master's degree in paleontology from Berkeley in 1926, received a \$75 metacarpal from her children for her 92nd birthday.

The fund drive is also an unconventional educational opportunity for children. It has attracted students of all ages, from those in graduate programs to 8-year-old Simon Pentzien, whose

written plea for a tooth also mentions his long-term goals. "Please don't disappoint me," he writes. "When I'm grown up I want to study paleontology in Berkeley." — *Michele Hopkins*

Electronic Confessional

American artist Anne Joelle is using the Internet and an impressive arsenal of software and hardware to create locally and interact globally. In November, Joelle, a painter, teacher, and master's degree candidate in fine arts at Tufts University and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, plans to premiere "Collective Voices," an interactive art exhibition that will allow art gallery-goers in Boston and Paris to communicate with each other simultaneously while viewing the exhibit.

Joelle created three 30 x 30-foot interactive walls for the exhibition, which allows viewers to discuss how women have been portrayed in various societies from classical to contemporary

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times. There will be one wall panel of music video; a wall panel of digitized images projected over textured paintings; and a confessional wall panel—in the form of an electronic book—in which viewers can interact with videos and historic characters by pushing buttons on a computer screen.

“I wanted to devise a method to integrate painting with computer technology,” Joelle said. “I had this yearning to integrate traditional painting, multimedia art installation, music video, and the electronic book to create an environment in which the viewer would totally participate in the experience. This exhibit at Tufts University is the culmination of that exploration.”

Joelle is using a program called Mosaic, which allows text, images, and video to be sent instantly over the Internet to any other Mosaic program user in the world. Matthew Cable, a computer science consultant, assisted her with the project. Joelle based “The Confessional” on a metaphor of the computer as a sacred religious space where people share their most intimate thoughts. “The Confessional” includes a computer keyboard so viewers can type comments about the exhibitions’ characters—all of whom were inspired by characters in Tennessee Williams’s play *The Glass Menagerie* and Sophocles’ *Electra*. Joelle wants participants to explore ideal images of females and their role in Greek society compared to women’s roles in contemporary times.

“We’re going to allow participants to not only write stories that respond to the questions,” Joelle said, “but they can link supporting documents—other text or papers or images on the Internet—giving them a structure through which to make creative use of all the organizational resources on the Internet.”

For example, if a viewer wants to connect her response to an image in the Vatican that has pertinence to the text she has written, she can type in an address to the Vatican library and point to an image. The computer, which is connected to a projector, will bring the image up on the screen so that everyone in the room can look at it.

While the exhibit has the potential to incorporate thousands of digital images (Please turn to *M Notes*, cont’d on p. 64)

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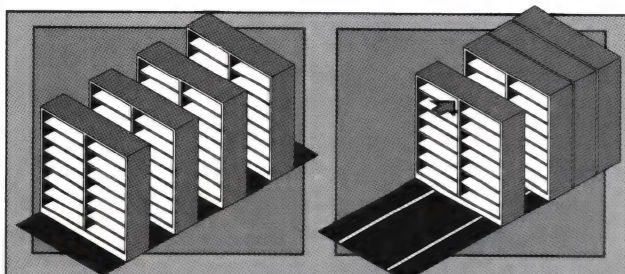
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*Berenice Abbott, Roast
Corn Man, Orchard &
Hester Streets, 1938
(black and white
photograph). Everyday
existence is at the heart
of "background history."*

Anonymous Heroes

By Kenneth L. Ames

Background History and Social Responsibility



Over the last few years, I have watched many historical societies and museums attempt to reinvent themselves. Propelled by changing economic and demographic conditions and the sometimes startling realization that they just don't matter to a lot of people, these institutions have tried to identify and craft new missions, new audiences, and new programs. The process of transforming the old into the new has usually been anything but easy. Discussions I have witnessed have been highly animated and sometimes downright contentious. I have also found them deeply troubling, even depressing, for while feelings have often run deep, thinking has sometimes run pretty shallow.

I have been struck by the recurrence of two unexamined assumptions. The first is the sociologically and politically naive notion that every historical museum or society can or should appeal to all sectors of society. The only way that can happen in today's world is for these organizations to hold a monopoly on something no one can live without. That seems unlikely and undesirable. The second is the idea that history is fixed, objective, and right. I thought people long ago recognized that histories are artifacts, that there is no such thing as the history of anything, only a history, and that there may be as many histories as there are people or perspectives. Yet I repeatedly heard many people, academic historians among them, speak of the history of a place or a phenomenon as though it were objective fact. Furthermore, and not the least surprising, the same people who spoke of the history also saw that history in completely orthodox terms. And I found that ominous, for I cannot see how one can reinvent a historical organization without rethinking both the organization and the meanings and purposes of history.

If orthodox history—that is, conventional textbook history, surface history, newspaper headline history—met all needs, celebrated all people of good will, liberated, enfranchised, and empowered all of us, dealt fairly with things truly important to most people, I would gladly embrace it. But we know that is not so. Orthodox history, like all orthodoxies, is characterized by intellectual narrowness, prejudice, and a false hierarchy of significance. Orthodox history celebrates some people but demeans others, enshrines some values but denigrates others, underlines the accomplishments of some but completely erases the accomplishments of others. Orthodox history glorifies

and perpetuates the values and ideologies of the dominant groups in past and contemporary society. For every person who endorses those values and ideologies, there is yet another who opposes them. Thus the fallacy that a historical society can satisfy all of society, for society is not homogeneous. And thus the fallacy that historical societies can make more than cosmetic change without rethinking history and the alternative forms it might take.

Historical organizations seriously intent upon rethinking history might start with the realization that significant numbers of people in American society and within the historical profession labor under an impoverished vision of history that simultaneously oppresses, depresses, and trivializes. This history is the product of a highly political process in which power interests ultimately obtain the upper hand. Many people understand the political bases and biases of this kind of history and, reasonably enough, try to avoid it. They will stay away from historical societies that purvey it.

There are at least two benevolent and socially responsible alternatives. The first builds on but extends and even overturns orthodox understandings of history. The second breaks with orthodoxy altogether and promotes a profoundly different set of values and perspectives. Both recognize and respect people's need to connect with the past, and both, therefore, have potential application within the setting of history museums.

The first and more familiar of these alternatives might be called "telling the truth." In place of one perspective, it argues for many perspectives. In place of one voice, it proposes multiple voices. This alternative recognizes that all historical events have affected different people in different ways, that historical forces have been promoted by human agents and have been beneficial to some and costly to others. The idea of telling the

Kenneth L. Ames is chief of historical survey, New York State Museum, Albany.

truth is by no means new. Minority historians, feminists, and others of many persuasions have long advocated telling the truth, but their voices are not typically heard in many museums, with the exception of the brave National Museums of American Art and History and a few others.

Good exhibitions are too often ephemeral and immobile. Some of the most distinguished truth-telling exhibitions have come and gone or remain too expensive for many to travel to visit. But we can find helpful guidance for

In this book, Loewen analyzes the contents, ideologies, and agendas of some 15 widely distributed American history textbooks and offers a refreshing antidote to their celebration of patriarchal, capitalist, and Eurocentric views and values. *Lies My Teacher Told Me* tells people the truth, both about what actually happened in the past and about how it has been misrepresented and falsified in the present.

Telling the truth is surely liberating. It sets the record straight, unmasks the fraudulent claims of dominators and

archy, the world of hierarchy, competition, and fragmentation, of prejudice, hostility, and violence, of obsession with greed, domination, and control. In other words, exactly the world celebrated and endorsed every day in the news (which actually means more of the same old). It is a world in which values are inverted, where truth is turned upside down. It is a world built on what Mary Daly calls the patriarchal reversal, where just the opposite of what is true is asserted, as in the example of news noted above. It is that world where, as

We need another strategy, one that acknowledges that many people would prefer to have nothing to do with the dominators or the malevolent world they have created. The second and more profound way of transforming history is to reject foreground history altogether and steal off into the deep and satisfying recesses of background history

telling the truth in published form. Consider a stimulating and eminently accessible little book by sociologist, historian, and social activist James W. Loewen. *The Truth about Columbus*, deliciously subtitled *A Subversively True Poster Book for a Dubiously Celebratory Occasion* (New York: New Press, 1992), is a populist and humane little tract that enables any thoughtful person to intelligently critique historical presentations. In 35 pages, Loewen sums up most of what is known and not known about Columbus. He carefully leads readers through a close analysis of numerous texts about Columbus and helps them locate bias, distortion, and, all too frequently, outright lies. He also shows how being attentive to other voices—Native Americans enslaved by Columbus, critical observers of the period—simultaneously brings us closer to an understanding of what actually happened and how people felt about it, which makes for more interesting history.

The Truth about Columbus is an advance excerpt from a longer forthcoming book called *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (New York: New Press, 1995).

oppressors, helps us understand events in all of their fullness and complexity, with all their conflict and controversy, subtlety, and nuance. Telling the truth enlivens the past and clarifies the present. Telling the truth puts an end to boring history. Despite these considerable virtues, however, it still cedes the upper hand to dominators and oppressors. It grants them a central position, even if only to serve as the focus of our derision or contempt. Newspaper headline history from the perspective of victims is still newspaper headline history. In a sense, the dominant order wins again.

So we need another strategy, one that acknowledges that many people would prefer to have nothing to do with the dominators or the malevolent world they have created. The second and more profound way of transforming history is to reject foreground history altogether and steal off into the deep and satisfying recesses of background history. What do I mean by “foreground” and “background”? I have borrowed these terms from radical feminist philosopher Mary Daly. By foreground, Daly means the conventional world of orthodox patri-

Thorstein Veblen taught years ago, what is, is wrong.

In marked and benign contrast, Mary Daly leads us into the background. In the background, the deep rhythms of life are affirmed; memory, connectedness, and wholeness are valued; the depths of the self abide and find nourishment; and the relatedness of all living things is acknowledged and honored. In the foreground, all is bickering and squabbling, pushing and shoving, greed and aggression. Not surprisingly, according to the principle of the patriarchal reversal, all of this is alleged to be not only important but good. But most of us know that is a lie. Life in the background, life in peace and contentment, life in touch with the forces of the natural world and in harmony with other people, life where we can accomplish something meaningful without cost to others is really what most people want.

Testimonies to the positive appeal of the background are abundant. “All ordinary people like us, everywhere,” wrote Louise Dickinson Rich in her 1942 classic, *We Took to the Woods*, “are trying to find the same things. It makes

no difference whether they are New Englanders or Texans or Malayans or Finns. They all want to be left alone to conduct their own private search for a personal peace, a reasonable security, a little love, a chance to attain happiness through achievement." Twenty years before, suffragette Edna Brush Perkins wrote of the conflict between her commitment to telling "large and assorted audiences that freedom consists in casting a ballot at regular intervals and taking your rightful place in a great democracy" and her desire "to escape

proposed exhibition ignored the Civil War, which he described as the most important event of the 19th century. From a foreground perspective, which values death and destruction, perhaps it is. But from a background perspective, which embraces life, nurture, and the deep cycles of life, the Civil War was merely the most destructive, the most disruptive, and the most sinister or unfortunate event of the age. In the background, all received truths are suspect; importance is a determination all people are free to make on their own.

ness of making and maintaining clothing, providing mutual support, and obtaining and preparing food. Nylander's words and those of many women of the past create a bridge across time and help us acknowledge the significance of the repeated and repetitious acts that sustain and configure our lives.

What about background historical sites? One of my favorites is a gentle and inviting place in Coventry, Conn., called Caprilands Herb Farm, open to the public year-round at no cost. Narrowly defined, Caprilands is devoted to



Detail from "The Washing Day," sheet-music cover (c. 1835). "Repeated and repetitious acts"—like doing laundry—"sustain and configure our lives."

from every manifestation of democracy in the solitariness of some wild and lonely place far from city halls, smokestacks, national organizations, and streets of little houses all alike." This desire to escape was both "a personal assertion and a protest against the struggle and worry, the bluff and banality and everlasting tail-chasing which goes on inside the walls of the stateliest statehouse and the two-room suite with bath."

Foreground or background. Which will it be? Many don't know that they actually have a choice. Their thinking has been entirely shaped by foreground values. I remember well an exhibit-planning meeting at one historical organization. A major American historian pointed out with disapproval that a

Like telling the truth about the past, background history is not new. It has flourished for years. It has merely been devalued or erased by the agents of the foreground. But there are, for example, hundreds, even thousands of background history books. We could craft wonderful college courses around a selection of them or put together stimulating reading series for funding by state humanities councils. I mention only one recent book as representative of the genre, Jane Nylander's *Our Own Snug Fireside: Images of the New England Home, 1760-1860* (New York: Knopf, 1993). Graced by an evocative background title, this beautifully written and sensitive book brings us into close communion with a century of daily domestic life in New England. Nylander examines the routines of everyday existence, particularly as they were experienced by women, ranging from the process of setting up a home, the mundane cycle of keeping house, and coping with the realities of winter, to the busi-

the study and enjoyment of herbs, but that description hardly captures the place.

What does it offer? First, an 18th-century farmstead surrounded by woods, rocks, and the ubiquitous stone walls of eastern Connecticut. Second, a series of some 20 or so thematic herb gardens, many with historical references. Third, an extensive array of herb plants for sale, including old standards and many rare or unusual varieties. Fourth, a fine bookstore specializing in books about herbs, gardening, cooking, and home decorating. Fifth, a selection of herb-related products, including soaps, canned goods, dried herbs, and potpourri. Sixth, lectures on herb cultivation and use. Seventh, by reservation, a memorable dining experience that typically transforms commonplace plants into the most extraordinary meals (including the most stunningly beautiful salad I have ever seen or eaten). And eighth, discussion with the (*Please turn to "History," page 59*)

Making the Galleries Sing:



Displaying African Art

By Warren M. Robbins

Since founding the National Museum of African Art three decades ago, I have attempted to foster both a recognition of the broader educational value of traditional African art and, related to it, a reconsideration of the ultimate purpose of the art museum in an egalitarian society. I have called for a change in perspective about how museums should display African objects—not merely in the limited context of aesthetics and art education but as instruments of social education in which the sculptures project well beyond the circumstances of their origin to become implements of cross-cultural understanding in a much wider sphere.

In contrast to art museums in general, which attract essentially art-oriented audiences, exhibitions of “African art” draw a much broader cross-section of Americans having other social, political or cultural motivations. Some are drawn by their interest in Africa as an increasingly important geopolitical entity; others by their wish to explore the art as a material aspect of the African-American heritage; some bring a concern for problems of international or intercultural understanding in general, but particularly those involving Africa and America. For all of these groups, even a rudimentary under-



Opposite: A mask (*panya ngombe*) of the Eastern Pende peoples, Kasai River region in Zaire. Above: Dogon Kanaga masked dancers from Sangha, Mali.

standing of African art can serve as a foundation for promoting intercultural respect and social equality at both the national and international levels.

Within their original cultures, sculpture, utilitarian objects, textiles, and articles of personal adornment served important communicative functions among people contemporaneous to one another and from generation to generation. Now, at the supracultural level, these same objects play a new, radically different yet equally vital communicative role. In museums and galleries throughout the world, the vibrant display of such objects not only conveys to non-Africans a sense of the creative genius of African peoples, but also helps supplant denigrating Euro-American views of African culture with valid scientific and aesthetic insights. Thus they provide a basis for conveying across cultural boundaries an awareness of the moral, social, and spiritual values so powerfully embodied in traditional African art.

From years of observation, I have come to believe that the separation of institutions that display African art into the categories of "art" and "ethnological" (or "natural history") museums is based upon a false dichotomy. Today's global consciousness, fostered particularly by the relativistic concepts of modern cultural anthropology, demands that all such collections explore the total creativity of traditional peoples—something that does not lend itself readily to neat academic categories superimposed *ex-cultura* for scholarly convenience.

My primary focus has been the transformative educational role that museums or galleries can play if they move beyond a purely aesthetic or ethnological viewpoint. Because this perspective is controversial, it is necessary at the outset to differentiate between the academic and the educational. Though

often considered interchangeable, the two categories are actually quite distinct.

Information of academic value does not automatically have educational impact beyond the limited community of scholars and students who study it. Understandably focused on academic concerns, scholars often fail to distinguish between the two in relation to the different audiences public educational institutions must address. Certainly, an important function of any museum is to research the materials it stores and exhibits. But with few exceptions a public museum is not an academic department of a university, and its primary audience is not students and teachers with specialized interests.

It is, of course, possible for public collections of African art to serve effectively—at no sacrifice of scholarly integrity—both professional (academic) and public (educational) goals. In a two-tiered educational program, such factors as aesthetic quality, authenticity, accurate classification, conservation, original research, and all corollary concerns of a repository of cultural material can be emphasized for the specialist—curator, scholar, or collector. But a public institution must also fulfill an educational responsibility toward non-specialists who have an equally compelling interest in African art, whether it be to broaden their own cultural awareness, or, in the case of African Americans, to gain a sense of ethnic validation by exploring their own cultural roots.

"Exclusive," Carl Sandburg reportedly once exclaimed when asked to name the worst word in the English language. "When you're exclusive," he said, "you leave out too much of humanity." In museum work, a failure to recognize the difference between the academic and the educational breeds the very exclusivity that concerned the author of *The People, Yes*. I experienced a striking example of this kind of elitism some years ago at an American Assembly, Arden House conference on museum problems in America. One of America's most distinguished art historians and museum directors complained to 50 colleagues about the presence of "too many people" in his museum these days disturbing its tranquility!

Fortunately, we are gradually moving away from the "sacred grove" concept of the museum as a quiet place for the cognoscenti to contemplate profound works of art. The convening of conferences and panels such as the one that led to the publication of *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, is in itself an encouraging sign of museum professionals' growing awareness of the broader needs of public education. But if we have at last come to recognize the special public responsibilities of tax-exempt and/or tax-supported institutions, how can we now move beyond the talking stage to develop programs and presentations that actually are responsive to such interests and needs?

To develop effective presentations, curators need to address the public in language that is both vivid and more readily comprehensible. They can do this without being patronizing. One must be ever alert to the familiar "MEGO" (my eyes glaze over) syndrome among museum-goers when docents' remarks or exhibition labels become too esoteric and vocabularies too specialized. I don't suggest that museum staff "capitulate" to an unknowing audience. But they must recognize the different depths and degrees of background interest each viewer brings to the exhibit. As Professor Harold Hill sang in *The Music Man*, "You gotta know the territory."

Granted, museum professionals know their product and are learning more about it every day or year, as scholars steadily accumulate more vital information from fieldwork. But how well do they know the territory in which the product is being presented? For those involved in cross-cultural education, this must become a matter of particular concern and consideration. If curators of African art do not give greater priority to familiarizing themselves with the heterogeneous audience their institutions must address, they restrict themselves to talking mostly to each other, with negligible impact on that broader public that desperately needs to have its consciousness of other cultures enhanced if an egalitarian society is ever to be achieved.

Developing more effective means for

Warren M. Robbins is founding director emeritus and senior scholar of the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. He is also the founder of the original corporate parent of the museum, the Center for Cross-Cultural Communication.

From years of observation, I have come to believe that the separation of institutions that display African art into the categories of "art" and "ethnological" (or "natural history") museums is based upon a false dichotomy

addressing that audience is the greatest challenge for any institution carrying a responsibility today for public education. Curators must take as their starting point what is on and in the minds of their new constituencies instead of limiting their primary focus to the information they would disseminate.

Any museum or gallery of African art must contend with two kinds of impediment to cross-cultural communication. The separation between cultures as disparate as those of Africa and America is obvious, and overcoming it is a challenge as we strive to uncover and eradicate our own ethnocentrism. Not so obvious but equally important from an educational standpoint is the gap between the extremely different cultures of the scholar and the general public. For the most part, the public is simply not interested in the esoteric detail that preoccupies academics, nor does it need in-depth information to gain maximal educational benefit from museum programs and exhibitions. One needn't absorb detail in order to appreciate significance. It is enough to make people aware of the significance of the art whether in its indigenous surroundings or in universal culture.

With regard to a museum of African art today, its educational function should permeate the entire character of the institution—not be relegated to the limited responsibilities of a curator of education. To make this point, I once remarked, only half-facetiously, that unlike most museums that had departments of education, ours was a department of education that had a museum.

A major educational goal of public collections of African art should be to illuminate for our own troubled and volatile society the profound implica-

tions of the traditional values that African art symbolizes. Homage to ancestors and respect for elders (providing a sense of historical continuity); the individual's responsibility to the community; observance of the common law handed down over generations; a prizing of the spiritual over the material—these are only a few aspects of traditional African life that America's multiethnic society might do well to study and emulate. Acquainting particularly young Americans, both black and white, with the significance of African art as a reflection of these values could provide a much-needed stimulus for redefining the individual's responsibility to society in this age and in our culture.

Inevitably, academics will ask whether such a social-education approach is relevant to the purposes of a museum or institute of African art. I would answer such a question with another: In these times of acute social discord, which cry out for redress of century-long educational grievance, how relevant is a publicly funded institution that focuses disproportionately and at great public expense on academic material to the neglect of more pressing needs for social understanding in America?

Traditional African society provides ample precedent for the social and educational use of objects that we have come to call art. Even if this great art is isolated in a static museum setting, better to have it serve, through relevant ancillary programming, broader educational purposes here in America—for the ultimate benefit of both Africa and America.

Most academics, however, strive for a certain "purity" in public presenta-

tions of African art, apprehensive lest it be diluted with social considerations better left to others. In view of the anti-intellectual temper of our times, this is understandable. But the quest for academic purity is essentially illusory and anachronistic in any case, rendered virtually meaningless by the ethnocentrism and chronocentrism that—despite our best efforts—are inseparable from its conclusions. From an African standpoint, the very presence in a Western art collection of an object of one-time (if not ongoing) spiritual significance renders it impure, even under the most responsible of curatorial circumstances. Whom are we kidding here?

Consider the poem composed in 1973 by Cameroon's then ambassador to the United States, Francois-Xavier Tchoungui, concerning the sacred *Afo-A-Kom* figure that had sojourned for a time in America. Purloined by a nephew of the king in something of a Shakespearean plot, it passed through the international art market before landing in a New York art gallery. There, a group of well-intentioned Americans purchased it for restitution to its homeland.

*As for you . . . eternal tranquility,
return hence to your ancestral land.
Return hence to look after the dead
and the living.*

*You, symbol of love and unity, be
forgetful of upheaval and blasphemy.
Your sojourn here has been nothing
but a nightmare which will soon vanish.*

*Forget forever your uncomfortable
appearance in this sophisticated
technology whose achievements tend to
overlook human considerations.*

In arguing that a principal function of publicly supported collections of African art must be the enlightenment of a greater public in terms of its own broader needs and interests, I do not denigrate the importance of scholarly research and its dissemination in academic circles. Research must be a strong component in any museum's program. But it should not determine the overall character of a museum as a public institution, where esoteric research must be kept in balance with presentations that are accessible to the general population.

Gallery labels provide crucial indices of how effectively a museum is communicating its message to its public audience. Obviously, the purpose of a label in a gallery (or a catalogue caption) is to enlighten the public about the identity, meaning, and purpose of an object on display. But it must be composed in such a way as to be relevant to the concerns and interests of those who are expected to read it. Otherwise they will not read it—beyond the first line or two; and if they are sufficiently turned off by the language of the first few labels they encounter in an exhibition, they will probably not read any more labels at all.

To be effective, a label should fulfill two basic functions: Using comprehensible descriptive terms, it should provide a handle with which viewers may grasp and retain the essential characteristics, purpose, and meaning of the objects. Labels should also stimulate viewers to make connections between these objects and their own society, possibly even their own personal lives.

But how is it possible to address effectively an Africa constituency that includes teachers and students from all grade levels and subject areas; the lay public; educational administrators; the press; diplomats; municipal, state, and federal officials; and in Washington, even members of Congress who represent them and who, not incidentally, authorize funding for museums and universities? All these groups—which should be regarded as parts of a museum's constituency—need to be made aware of the significance of the African creative tradition and its relevance to the education of contemporary Americans, both black and white.

Effective museum education also involves speaking in many voices, often at the same time, in vocabularies appropriate for each audience segment: unspoiled and gratifyingly unprejudiced schoolchildren, rambunctious teenagers, university students, art lovers, Africanists, and church and community groups. Museums must learn what ideas each group of people brings to exhibits. Using language that



A lidded basket of fiber and glass beads collected in Zaire from the Yaka peoples.

is at once informative from the museum's standpoint and engaging and provocative for their respective constituencies, they must address anticipated audience preconceptions in different ways with their labels, placards, docent talks, and lectures.

One way of bringing the museum to life is to involve the audience—particularly school groups—in participatory programs in which the art serves as a backdrop, eventually, if not instantaneously, to be comprehended and appreciated. Such activities as impromptu “jam sessions” and “fashion shows” in which children play African musical instruments, dance wearing masks, and model genuine African robes and dresses, are a delight for the youngsters as they are for the accompanying adults observing them.

One of the most egregious kinds of visual static occurs when curators overdo the “interior design” element in their installations. African art exhibits don't have to look like Cartier or Tiffany showrooms; they shouldn't prompt the unspoken reaction of visitors: “What a fabulous display of display cases!” African art is so visually intense and so powerfully evocative (unlike the cooler art of Asia, for example) that it does not need splendiferous settings. “Simple, neat, and neutral” should be the general rule, letting the art express its own visual eloquence. At the same time, curators must never be afraid that they might compromise some abstract canon of “design purity” if they include in the galleries a strong didactic complement of photo blowups, slide shows, or videos sufficient to suggest the indigenous environment.

Music, above all, should enhance the gallery atmosphere, since it is inseparable from the utilization of masks and other objects in traditional African life. Music-enhanced displays offer a striking contrast to the practice of many Western museums, which tend to sterilize objects by displaying them in splendid, silent isolation. African galleries should not be staid and silent. Visitors should not feel impelled to speak in hushed tones. A museum need not be a mausoleum.

To render the art less alien, aloof, and forbidding, and thus more accessible to the public, curators can also utilize techniques of what I call “visual semantics.” There are several devices that can in the most subtle ways enhance visual comprehension. A museum can create discrete spaces and groupings that help the viewer sort out and give structure to a multitude of visual impressions otherwise colored by prejudice. Using warm earthen tones suggests the colors of the tropical or subtropical environment; the stark white commonly used on gallery walls is not only totally uncharacteristic of Africa but blinds the viewer's eyes to the nuances of sculptural style and surface by literally causing the pupils to contract. Installing dramatic lighting helps restore to certain works their original evocative power.

The exigencies of security and con-

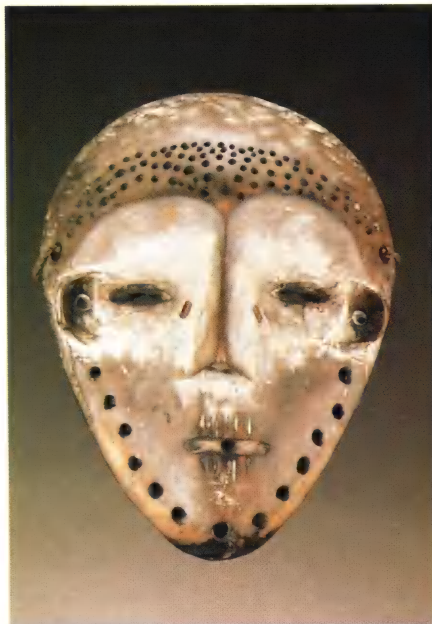
servation dictate, unfortunately, that certain works of African sculpture be displayed behind glass. This creates a further visual and psychological distancing for viewers unfamiliar with non-Western art. To transcend this barrier, galleries should be laid out with no objects in the center space, so that viewers entering the gallery find themselves surrounded by the sculpture on all sides, not outside of it. Thus enveloped, they feel they are on the "inside," and the glass barrier becomes less obtrusive. Display cases should never be arranged so that viewers looking through them can see objects beyond, thus compounding the distraction caused by the glass.

Displaying multiple examples of certain categories of sculpture (either tribal style or function) is another way to subliminally highlight salient features of African art and artifacts. Instead of isolating the sublime aesthetic quality of one exquisite Bamana *Chi Wara*, for example, a veritable "herd" of antelopes could be displayed "galloping," as it were, across a gallery wall not only to compound a recognition of their unique dynamism but also to reveal the remarkable diversity within the unity of one particular, highly disciplined tradition. The display of six, 10, or more of one kind of object as a subsection of an exhibition also strikes a newcomer to African art as no single object can, subliminally conveying a sense of what comprises a particular style, and how it relates to or differs from other styles. It also places certain masks, often regarded at first sight as horrendous, within a broader and more palatable context of highly refined yet related styles. What thus comes through to the uninitiated viewer are stylistic relationships rather than the negatively perceived character of any particular example. Aesthetic understanding is enhanced by such groupings of objects, instead of being inhibited by the preconceived notions that viewers bring to exhibitions. This is visual education at its most forceful.

By showing categories of objects in multiples, an art museum may seem to be approaching the exhibition policy of a natural history museum. Yet the art institution must, while giving greater

thought to the aesthetics of display, do precisely that if the full scope of African art is to be revealed to the public.

To reach that public, African art institutions must make greater efforts to go beyond their own doors. If a museum has a collection of thousands of objects, for example, with considerable duplication of works, it is lamentable to allow those not on display to languish unseen in locked storage cabinets for



A mask (idimu) of the Lega peoples in Zaire.

years on end. To expand the educational capability of smaller institutions, loan policies of the larger ones would have to become more flexible. Secondary materials could also be organized into packaged, didactic displays or assembled into indefinitely traveling, extension exhibits. Packaged exhibits in which the display cases themselves are transported in styrofoam can be set up readily in schools or churches, or even at conferences and conventions.

Another means of reaching a broader public is the artmobile. As part of a 41-year-old program, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts borrowed for one year (and then extended for two more) a representative collection of African art that circulated to more than 100 sites throughout the state for viewing by tens

of thousands of people. For such a costly undertaking today, museums would probably have to enlist the support of public-spirited trucking companies to provide trucks and possibly even drivers. But in general, funding to bring art to the public need not be a problem. There are enough federal, state, municipal, and private agencies waiting to support well-conceived projects.

Bringing art to people, as opposed to the usual custom of trying to lure people into museums to see it, has immense psychological value. African art reflects a tradition in which art is integral to life, not something exalted and separate from it, as is primarily the case with art in the West. Bringing smaller, less intimidating exhibits of African art to the public can be a powerful way of symbolically expressing this idea of an art that makes everyday life more meaningful for all the members of a community.

Through the recognition it has gained as one of the great creative traditions of humankind, African art refutes some of the most pernicious stereotypes about the "savage inferiority" of "primitive" cultures. But if a museum is to present African art effectively, it must not only display the art but convey along with it the vibrant spirit and tremendous warmth of Africa itself. Exhibitions must make the galleries sing and dance and reverberate with all that a vital, thriving Africa has to contribute.

Fortunately, we are also moving beyond the Victorian concept of the museum as a kind of treasure chest—implicit in which is a sense of the entitlement of "superior" cultures to display the spoils wrested from their colonies, and the equally prideful idea that we alone are adequately equipped to display them knowledgeably. We have much to learn not only about Africa in relation to ourselves, but about ourselves in relation to Africa. And as we strive to exorcise our own dismissive or patronizing attitudes, we must also seek to fashion a new and dynamic vision of the museum as an interdisciplinary, interactive resource for a kind of public education that grows more critically important with every passing year. **M**

Creampuffs and Hardball

Are You Really Worth What You Cost?

By Stephen E. Weil

The questions about their field that museum workers serve up to one another at their periodic gatherings (national, regional, and local) are generally creampuffs. While shaped and flavored in a variety of ways, these questions can almost invariably be reduced to one: Is the museum truly a worthwhile institution? With almost equal invariability, those attending these gatherings conclude that it is. To those who work in them it appears all but self-evident that, notwithstanding their temporary shortcomings, museums do make an important contribution to society. They preserve and transmit our natural and cultural heritage, they add to the world's store of knowledge, and they provide their publics with expanded opportunities for learning, personal growth, and enjoyment.

As crunch time approaches, however, and as the demands that are made on the public and private resources available to the nonprofit sector continue to grow at a faster rate than those resources themselves, virtually every museum may find itself faced with several much tougher questions—not creampuffs this time, but hardball.

Without disputing the museum's claim to worthiness, what these questions will address instead is its relative worthiness. Is what the museum contributes to society really commensurate with the annual cost of its operation? Could some other organization (not necessarily a museum) make a similar or even greater contribution at a lesser cost? What would be the consequence—how much lost? how much gained?—if the same expenditure were to be devoted to some other activity entirely? We currently spend billions of dollars each year on the operation of our museums. We have yet to determine, however, in what measure that expenditure represents a wise and informed public policy choice, and in what measure it may simply be the hangover of some old and still-to-be fully examined habit.

Accompanying these hardball questions is a profound shift in the way that nonprofit organizations are being evaluated by those who provide them with resources. This shift, which appears to have started with social service and health care agencies and worked its way through higher education, now seems to be spreading across the entire nonprofit sector. It involves a newly heightened concentration on "outcomes" rather than either "inputs" or "outputs" as the principal basis upon which to judge a charitable organization's public programs.

Little more than a generation ago, a museum was still measured largely by the resources, i.e., the "inputs," that it had available: How good was its collection? How well-trained and respected was its staff? How adequate and in what condition were its facilities? How solid was its attendance? How large was its endowment? Good numbers equaled a good museum.

In the 1970s and well into the 1980s, the principal focus shifted from "inputs" to "outputs." No longer judged so much by the measurable resources that they had available, museums tended to be judged instead by the programmatic use to which they put those resources. "Better utilization of collections" was a key phrase, and peer review became a principal means of evaluation. Who better to judge how skillfully a museum staff deployed its limited resources than colleagues in other museums who faced the same challenge daily? "Output" analysis goes still a step further. It examines the impact of those programs, rather than simply their quality.

Stephen E. Weil is deputy director of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. This piece was delivered as the keynote address at the annual meeting of the New Jersey Association of Museums, June 1994.

We currently spend billions of dollars each year on the operation of our museums. We have yet to determine, however, in what measure that expenditure represents a wise and informed public policy choice, and in what measure it may simply be the hangover of some old and still-to-be fully examined habit

In the United Kingdom, a remarkably direct phrase has emerged to describe the expectation of those responsible for providing public funds. What they expect is "value for money." Typical of its use are recent remarks by the Right Honorable Peter Brooke who, as the U.K.'s secretary of state for national heritage, oversees the funding of the U.K.'s major museums. Noting that publicly supported cultural organizations will be expected to carry out their day-to-day operations "within an overall framework of priorities and public policies determined by government," Brooke emphasized that they must also "assure value for money for the taxpayer in pursuit of those aims."

What this all involves in essence is a new accountability in which organizations will be required to demonstrate not only (a) that they can account for the resources entrusted to them, and (b) that they used those resources efficiently, but above all (c) that they also used those resources effectively—that they used them to produce a positive outcome in the community they intended to serve. The museum that seeks to meet the standards of this new accountability must be prepared to show in what positive ways its target community has benefited from its programs.

This need not be a narrow constraint. That the museum continues to preserve a community's otherwise endangered heritage might certainly be one such beneficial outcome. Another might relate to the transmission of knowledge and/or skills, to the modification of behavior, or simply to the provision of enjoyment or recreation. The only required constant is that the benefits described respond to what some have called the ultimate "So what?" questions. So what difference did it make that your museum was there? So what would have been the difference had it not been?

Implicit also in this new accountability is the question of limits. How should those who allocate funds determine the boundaries of an applicant's need? Is the outcome that an organization seeks infinite in scope (with the inference that the organization's need for additional resources will consequently be insatiable) or is there a point at which the organization may be considered as accomplishing its goals? Is there such a thing as an adequately funded museum, or is nothing ever enough?

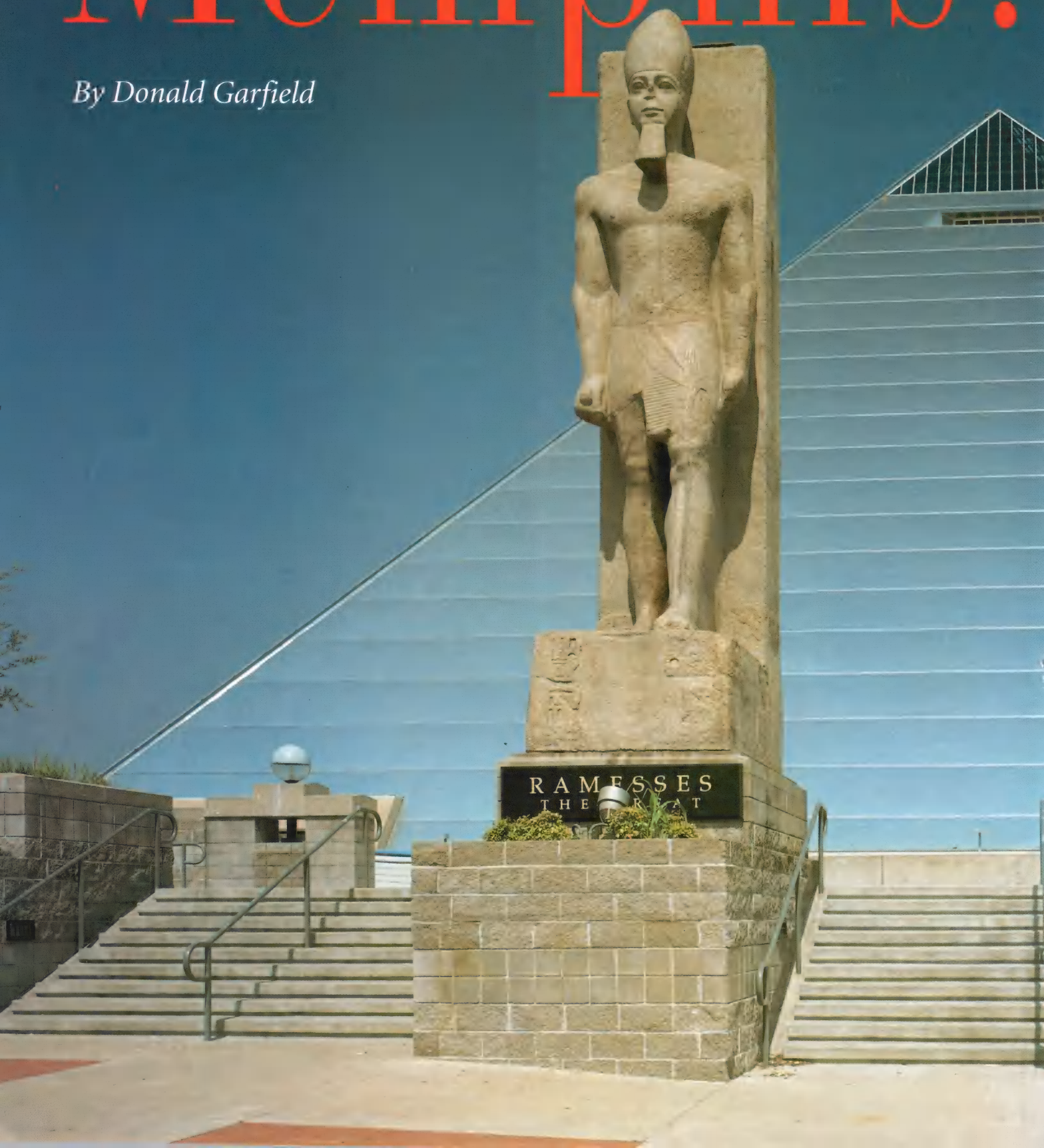
Richard F. Larkin, technical director for the Not-for-Profit Industry Services Group at Price Waterhouse, has observed that this is a problem endemic to almost all charitable organizations. Their goals are generally formulated in open-ended terms ("To encourage an understanding and appreciation of contemporary art" or "To improve the health services available to the indigent members of our community") with little to indicate what would constitute actual success or assist an observer in determining whether or not it was being achieved. This is in sharp contrast to the for-profit organization where success or failure can be determined by comparing some bottom line "outcome" figure with one or another of the organization's inputs.

Without a definition of success, of course, museums also lack a definition of failure. Might this be the reason that so few museums ever seem to fail? Dance companies dissolve, symphony orchestras collapse, and literary magazines disappear with regularity. Most museums, though—held in place, perhaps, by their collections—seem to survive indefinitely. They may shrink, they may lose or fail to earn accreditation, but rarely do they expire. Short of outright insolvency, the museum field seems to have few ways to identify those institutions whose chronic inability to achieve any demonstrably beneficial outcome cannot possibly justify the ongoing expense of their maintenance.

The museum seeking to articulate the ways in which it intends to impact its target community would be wise to observe one caution: concentrate on those object-related outcomes that are most particular to museums and don't inadvertently undermine your unique importance by describing outcomes that might as easily be achieved by some other organization. Put another way, a museum may only be considered essential so long as its impact is perceived to be both valuable and unique. Consider, to use a wicked example, the museum improvident enough to base its case for public support on an economic impact study that quantifies its value to the com-
(Please turn to Forum, continued on page 60)

Memphis:

By Donald Garfield



Wonder and Grace

When Elvis Presley plunked down \$100,000 in 1957 for Graceland, a faux antebellum mansion, he upset the order of the South. Guitar strummin', hip-wiggin', and black-music singin' white boys like Elvis were not supposed to be able to rise that fast through the ranks of genteel Memphis society. His meteoric success, however, was merely the latest in a string of shocks that pummeled tradition-bound Memphis.

During the early '50s, the modern age began breaking through barriers that dated back to Civil War times. In 1951, responding to growing pressure, the Brooks Museum—the city's most venerable temple of art and culture—set aside Thursdays for black visitors. Agent of preserving the rigid racial codes of the past, long-time political kingpin E. H. Crump died in 1954. And a symbol of the new post-World War II lifestyle debuted in 1952 when Kemmons Wilson opened the first Holiday Inn. The stage was set for the turbulence of the 1960s, a decade of decline spurred by Martin Luther King's 1968 assassination, and the urban revival of the 1980s.

I visited Memphis in late March, two months after an ice storm swept through the area. Alongside the spacious main boulevards, Poplar and Park, piles of tree limbs and branches recalled the disaster, a veritable meteorological Sherman's March. I brought in my mental carpet bag a typical northerner's unfamiliarity with the real South, fed by *Gone with the Wind* on the one hand and the

Memphis's pyramid-shaped arena, guarded by the Egyptian builder-king Ramesses, evokes the origins of the city's name. Inset: William Eggleston, Untitled, from the portfolio Graceland (1983). Adolescent aesthetics run wild in Elvis Presley's Jungle Room.

Donald Garfield is senior editor of Museum News.



novels of William Faulkner on the other. My interest in Memphis derived from an early and intense love of the blues, from its plantation origins in Mississippi to its amplified transformation in famous Chicago blues bars like Theresa's and Pepper's Lounge, which I frequented as a graduate student at the University of Chicago in the late '60s.

This passion for the blues also took me south one day to Clarksdale, Miss. As I bisected pancake-flat cotton fields, trying to get back to Memphis before the unusual and persistent rain started

Built on the site of a French fort dating to the late 17th century, Memphis got its city charter in 1849 and fast became a major transshipment point for cotton and lumber, located as it is at the head of the Mississippi's deep navigable waters. Spared destruction during the Civil War (the city was captured by the Union after an hour-and-a-half naval battle), it suffered multiple epidemics of yellow fever that resulted in the exodus of two-thirds of the population and the loss of its city charter in 1879. Repaving the streets, installing

Masters among cities away from the East Coast where residents likely had never seen examples of Renaissance and Baroque European painting and sculpture. (According to Carmean, a city-wishing to have part of the Kress collection had to have a Kress store.)

By the 1950s, Rogers's jewel-box pavilion proved inadequate to house the growing operation. A barn-like addition satisfied the need to make room for the Kress gift, but was torn down when the Brooks grew again in 1974 and 1989. The last addition accommodates the

Strolling through the Dixon's English formal gardens and woods on gravel paths, the visitor takes in the smells and sounds of refulgent nature; tulips ranging from pink to orange growing in the greenhouse give the French canvases inside the house a clear run for the money

once again, I passed glamorized billboards for Tunica (Miss.) gambling hot spots. Smiling, well-dressed gamblers radiated their excitement at having won big-time at the casino and beacons would-be winners to follow their example. (A line of traffic heading to Tunica suggested the power of their message.) But at one point, a billboard shaded an encampment of shotgun shacks, the kind Dorothea Lange photographed during the Depression. This momentary juxtaposition of rich and poor, dream and reality, summed up and hyperbolized the tensions I felt during my Memphis stay. It capped a string of insights into the nature of Southern life and the parts museums play in interpreting and contributing to it.

To understand present-day Memphis, a little history goes far in explaining the city's vitality and its position as the urban embodiment of Mid-South culture and cauldron of modern American popular music. Set a secure 40 feet above the Mississippi River on the Fourth Chickasaw Bluff, Memphis began as part of a rich Native American civilization, whose latest members, the Chickasaw and Choctaw, ceded their claims to lands east of the Mississippi in 1818 and eventually settled in Oklahoma.

artesian wells, and building a sewer system led to the town's revival and prosperity at the turn of the century.

Museum history in Memphis begins in 1916 with the founding of the Brooks Memorial Art Gallery (now Memphis Brooks Museum of Art). At the time, any metropolis worth its weight in civic pride needed an art museum. Wealthy Memphian Bessie Vance Brooks originally envisioned four buildings, devoted to the fine arts, music, drama, and science. An East Coast visitor entering the lush confines of Overton Park, where the Brooks sits on a gentle hill, might be excused momentary déjà vu because the Brooks echoes the classical refinement of the Morgan Library in New York City, done by the same architect—James Gamble Rogers. According to E.A. Carmean, the Brooks's director, at the 1916 opening everyone applauded the dedication speeches, looked inside at the empty interior, and then went home.

The classical shell gradually encompassed an impressive collection, mightily assisted by the donation of a portion of the Samuel H. Kress Collection of Italian artworks. Because Kress opened his first store in Memphis in 1896, the Brooks enjoyed pride of place when the great benefactor distributed his Old

entry and its design quietly repeats the classical vocabulary of the original structure, whose serene exterior contrasts with the vivid colorism of the recently reinstalled interior rooms.

The museum follows Mrs. Brooks's original mission of bringing the world's great art to Memphis, rather than providing gallery space for local artists. Like many regional art institutions, it feels the tension between displaying and championing local creativity and presenting work from other lands and cultures. Carmean says the Brooks strikes a balance between the two. It organizes biennials (the one scheduled for September is devoted to photography and features the internationally acclaimed color photographer and Memphian William Eggleston) and possibly will become an alternate-year venue for Wonders exhibitions, which, since 1987 after the phenomenal success of "Ramesses the Great," has orchestrated cultural extravaganzas on Napoleon, Catherine the Great, Turkish art, and the Etruscans.

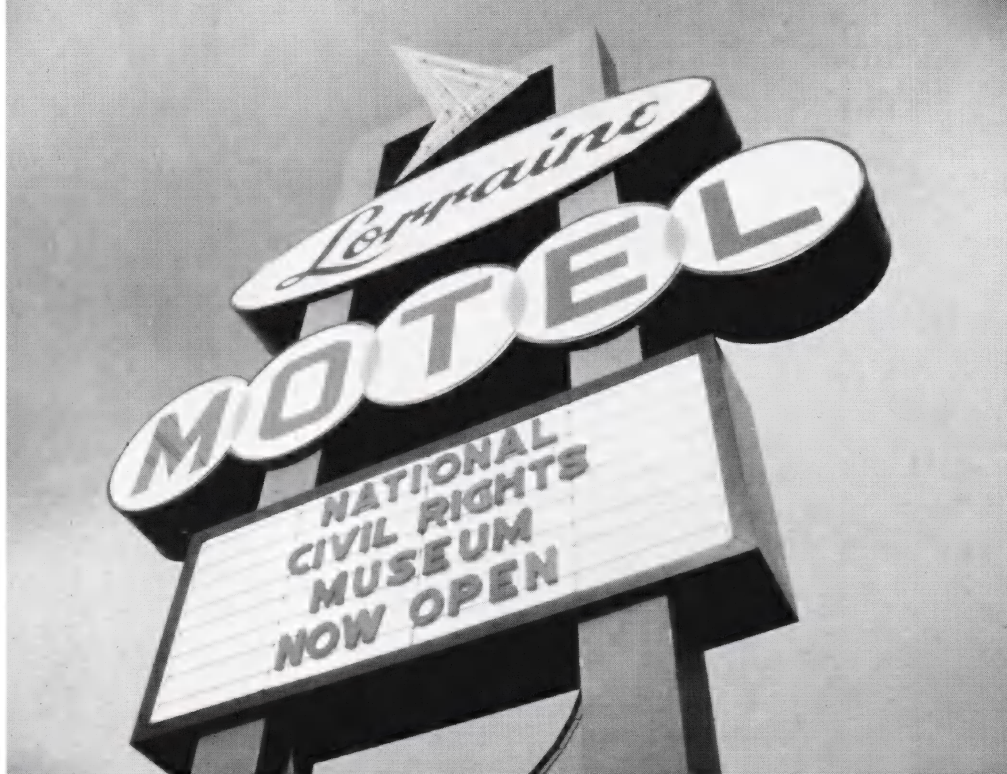
Certainly the most encyclopedic art museum in the Mid-South, the Brooks's collection rounds out with a long-term loan of Greek vases from the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Greek and Roman antiquities, African and Oceanic

art, contemporary art, and important Pre-Columbian holdings. It received French Impressionist works from Mr. and Mrs. Hugo Dixon before the couple decided to turn their Georgian estate and 17 acres into a gallery and garden.

Located in a verdant and prosperous residential neighborhood across the street from the Memphis Botanical Garden, the Dixon Gallery and Gardens opened as a museum in 1976. Like the Phillips Collection in Washington, it displays its 19th-century collection of French and American Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painting set among sofas and sideboards. The spirit of the Dixons, their cosmopolitan taste and sensibility financed by the profits of Hugo Dixon's cotton business, suffuses the original building and represents the high end of social and cultural life in Memphis.

A year after the museum opened, the foundation set up by the Dixons added a wing to house the Warda Steven Stout Collection of 18th-century German porcelain. In a spacious gallery enhanced by spectacular vistas of formal gardens and woodlands, cases feature gems of Meissen tableware and figures, tankards inspired by chinoiserie, and acrobatic configurations of *comedia dell'arte* characters Harlequin and Columbine.

The success of the Dixon is reflected in an active temporary exhibit schedule and the 1986 doubling of the museum's space to accommodate an auditorium and gift shop, as well as more gallery space for a newly acquired pewter collection. Gallery director John Buchanan brimmed with enthusiasm when discussing the gallery's accomplishments. It boasts 200,000 visitors a year, taking advantage of its dual mission of art and horticulture by relating the gardens and grounds—which specialize in local flora including wildflowers, azaleas, and camelias—and art exhibitions such as an upcoming show devoted to Tiffany, whose work reveals significant horticultural influence. Strolling through the English formal gardens and woods on gravel paths, the visitor takes in the smells and sounds of refulgent nature; tulips ranging from pink to orange growing in the greenhouse give the French canvases inside the house a clear



The National Civil Rights Museum is located on the site and includes part of the Lorraine Motel where the Rev. Martin Luther King was slain in 1968.

run for the money.

The emphasis on regional plants at the Dixon parallels the locally focused mission of another Memphis landmark—the Pink Palace Museum and Planetarium. Its director, Doug Noble, admits that non-Memphians probably do not have high expectations of a museum named Pink Palace. I envisioned something carnival-like painted the color and possessing the intellectual weight of pink cotton candy. In fact, the name refers to the pink Georgian marble used by Clarence Saunders, founder of the Piggly-Wiggly grocery chain, to decorate the exterior of his intended “palace.” Saunders’s meteoric success—opening his first convenience market in 1916 and expanding to head a chain of 1,241 stores by 1922—came crashing to earth on Wall Street, where he did battle and lost his empire. By 1930 his residence, which had not progressed beyond the exterior, fell to the city and opened as a museum of natural history and industrial arts.

Today the museum features natural history exhibits on the ground floor and cultural history upstairs. The original mansion is undergoing restoration in preparation for a summer 1995 opening as a showcase of 20th-century Memphis

history. Making my way through the museum, I encountered small bands of schoolchildren and chaperones darting from one interactive exhibit to the next. At one point, the din of adolescent voices blended with the stomping of metal on wood followed by a mechanical roar. A Dinamation model of a triceratops had captured the attention of the young crowd. For 50 cents a pop, the Cretaceous-era denizen moved back and forth, twisted its neck from side to side, and emitted a sound like a suddenly unplugged vacuum cleaner. The lone triceratops downstairs, which according to Noble has paid for itself four bits by four bits over a period of nine years, had relatives upstairs when I visited in late March: a group of kinetic dinos produced by Kokoro.

When Noble came to the museum in 1980, he had to rip out all the antiquated displays and replace them with interactive exhibits on, for example, geology and the microscope, dioramas of local endangered species, and the flora and fauna of a regional lake. The upstairs path begins with the Native American presence in the Memphis area, traces of early European settlement including a reconstructed cabin, and Civil War displays. A large section covers the history

Memphis Museums à la Carte

Fortified with the city's world renowned barbecue, cultural tourists should find room on their plate for the following museums: **The National Ornamental Metal Museum**, scrappy as its name implies, features a working smithy on the grounds of a former Marine hospital. The only museum in Memphis with a river view, it welcomes visitors at its whimsical gates commissioned from metalworkers from around the world.

They designed individualized rosettes for the gate (among them an English breakfast of ham, eggs, and toast). Changing exhibits have included African-American and Native-American metal and jewelry. **Memphis Zoo** has traded in the last of its iron-bar exhibits for outdoor habitats, most recently the Commercial Appeal Cat Country with an exotic Asian pagoda backdrop and juxtaposition of felines and prey animals like red pandas and capybaras—kept at a respectful distance from each other. On tap for fall 1994 are "Primate Canyon" and a nocturnal exhibit, "Animals of the Night," as well as the Cat House Cafe. The zoo parlays Memphis's Egyptian connection with an entryway and buildings modeled on a hypostyle temple and features an obelisk inscribed with names of donors. Situated on 96 acres, the **Memphis Botanic Garden** features 20 formal gardens including a Japanese garden with a bridge and pavilion and a sensory garden intended for disabled visitors. A tropical conservatory displays exotic flora and a municipal rose garden boasts 1,500 speci-

mens of 100 rose varieties. The Goldsmith Civic Garden Center exhibits the work of regional artists and houses a permanent display of Boehm porcelain. **The Art Museum of the University of Memphis** plumbs the vital musical and folk art traditions of the Mississippi Delta with "Club Pyramid and Memphis



Blues," an interdisciplinary blues club with decor consisting of poetry, stories, and histories of the blues set among photos and paintings of blues musicians. A jukebox spills out the sounds of regional music, and programming includes live performances and interviews with blues musicians. In essence a living museum, **Beale Street** testifies to the enduring vitality of Memphis blues. Once the heart of urban black music, the street declined during the '70s to be revived in the mid-1980s with involvement of R&B great B.B. King, who owns a club on Beale Street and plays there a few times a year. Next door, the **Memphis Police Museum**, combines a working police substation and displays of weapons,

mug shots, police records, and a jail cell. **The Center for Southern Folklore** melds shop, exhibit gallery, bookstore and information hub. Housed in the former Lansky Clothing Store, which furnished some of Elvis's attire, it puts on music festivals and functions as all-around Memphis

Below: the daily march of the Peabody Hotel's ducks.

Left: The Art Museum of the University of Memphis features an authentic blues club/art work, Club Pyramid, built by Earl Simmons in the gallery.



cicerone. When describing the Mississippi Delta, 1930s Memphis historian David Cohn wrote that the Delta begins in the lobby of the **Peabody Hotel**. Moribund during the depressed era after King's assassination, the hotel began to revive its prior splendor in the early '80s, coinciding with earnest and largely successful efforts to breathe life back into downtown Memphis. (A trolley on Main Street connects the Pyramid in the north to the Civil Rights Museum in the south.) A main attraction at the

Peabody is the parade of ducks—at 11:00 every morning they descend by elevator from the skyway and waddle on red carpet to frolic until 5:00 in the lobby fountain. (No duck is on the menu at any of the hotel's gourmet restaurants.) Across from the Peabody and down an alley, the **Rendezvous** lined with Memphis memorabilia dishes up dry but heavenly barbecue to excite palates but spare shirtfronts. Highway 61, the "blues highway" on which blues great Bessie Smith died in a car crash, connects Memphis with the heart of the Mississippi Delta. It runs past Tunica, the site of off-shore, riverboat casino gambling, and finally cuts through Clarksdale, boyhood home of Tennessee Williams. There the **Delta Blues Museum**, part of the town's Carnegie Library, has ambitious expansion plans and figures as ground zero of modern popular American music. Its exhibits and listening stations trace the sources of the blues and follow it as it made its way north from plantations like the Stovall and the music of Muddy Waters to Memphis and finally Chicago where the blues went electric. On the way back to Memphis, a detour across the Mississippi leads to Helena and the **Delta Cultural Center** exhibiting photographs and artifacts that tell the Arkansas side of the region's history and culture. This sidetour to the south rounds out and helps illuminate the role Memphis plays in the region.

of medicine, recalling the fact that the largest Memphis employer is the medical community of schools and hospitals. Honoring Saunders, the museum recreated a vintage Piggly-Wiggly store, in which "shoppers" go through a turnstile, take a basket, and fill it from shelves teeming with canned goods and packages of flour and rice. The journey ends at a cash register by the door.

Noble proudly relates how the museum system acquired its most recent component, the Coon Creek Science Center. The center's site, a 240-acre farm, has a creek running through it revealing one of the country's richest fossil beds, harkening back 70 million years when the region formed the floor of the Gulf of Mexico. It will provide precious specimens to add to the Pink Palace's paleontology exhibits.

Directors at the Brooks, Dixon, and Pink Palace spoke of efforts their institutions have taken to encourage more people to visit their museums, especially from the large black community in Memphis. Despite the city's modest population of about a million, the potential museum audience spans a wide geographical area embracing much of northern Mississippi, western Tennessee, and Arkansas. Memphis, in fact, has always been considered the capital of the Delta region, that broad swatch of river-soaked and cotton-rich bottomland stretching from the southwest corner of Tennessee to Vicksburg, Miss. Its largely rural population might not normally think of attending museums. But one exhibit drew them in vast numbers—"Ramesses the Great" and its offspring, the Wonders series.

Mounted in Memphis's downtown convention center in 1987, "Ramesses" attracted more than 650,000 visitors. East Coast art aficionados rubbed elbows with Arkansas farmers wearing coveralls—a testimony to the planners' success in marketing the exhibit. The show's genesis lay in Egypt—dear to the hearts of Memphians ever since 19th-century city founders decided to name the Tennessee metropolis perched on the Mississippi after the ancient Egyptian capital lying athwart the Nile. A Memphis Brooks trustee, who was visiting Cairo in 1984 with his wife, learned from an Egyptian museum official that

a traveling exhibit dedicated to Ramesses was to come to the United States. They offered Memphis as a possible added venue, and contact with Mayor Richard Hackett set the train in motion. Out on a walk in Memphis (Egypt), the Tennessee couple encountered fragments of a 23-ton, colossal statue of the great Egyptian king alongside a road. They and Hackett led a drive to finance the statue's restoration and its eventual journey to the United States to accompany the exhibit.

The success of "Ramesses," which became the city's first mega-exhibition, led the city to create a program of similar shows under the title Wonders: Memphis International Cultural Series. Its most recent offering, "Napoleon," failed to draw the predicted gate, according to Wonders director Jon Thompson, because potential tourists feared the summer 1993 floods of the upper Midwest had affected Memphis. (He recalls anxious French museum officials calling to find out whether their objects were under water yet.) The Wonders exhibit planned for this year showcasing a mummy and gold artifacts found in a Peruvian tomb had to be postponed because of political unrest in the South American country. Thompson has slated "Imperial Tombs of China" for 1995.

Ramesses, known as one of Egypt's great builders, also inspired the city to fulfill a long-deferred dream of having a pyramid grace the Mississippi river town. At the state centennial celebration held in Nashville in 1897, which gave that city its Parthenon, the Memphis pavilion took the form of a pyramid. Its modern-day counterpart now stands, a mirage of shining steel and glass under the Memphis sun, across the street from the convention center and guarded by a replica of the Ramesses colossus. The pyramid houses a 22,000-seat arena for concerts. Although symbolizing death, it actually signals the revitalization of Memphis's downtown.

The power of personalities like Ramesses, Catherine the Great, Napoleon, splendors of the Ottoman court, and the fascination with death, mummies, and the beyond reach ordinary citizens in, for example, small rural

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Delta towns the way an exhibit on Ming vases does not. When Wonders is in town, all museums benefit from the increased number of tourists looking for things to do. But the Brooks's Carmean distinguishes between Wonders shows and art exhibits: the former are really artifact shows with lots of evocative exhibit design transporting visitors to Istanbul or 19th-century France à la the National Gallery of Art's "British Country Houses."

Of course, Memphis is no stranger to the cult of personality or lavish domestic settings, or even to a fascination with death. A drive down Highway 51 takes the faithful to Elvis Presley Boulevard and Graceland, the former residence and burial ground of the rock and roll star. No fancy strip malls of national franchises line this road headed toward rural Mississippi; rather the signs of urban poverty—auto wreckers, bail bond agencies, and boarded-up businesses recall Elvis's Tupelo, Miss., roots. Graceland's location on the outskirts of town and on the road to his home state seemed to symbolize his marginalized position vis-à-vis the rest of Memphis

society.

A visitor to Lourdes or Fatima would immediately recognize the signs of hal- lowed ground: first, the merchandising of the memory along the way to the shrine. Much of the seediness of shops hawking Elvis memorabilia has van- ished since the days following his death in 1977. The Presley estate headed by his former wife, Priscilla, has taken con- trol of presenting Elvis to the public— in the mansion and in the Elvis Presley Automobile Museum across the road with its famous pink Cadillac and two private planes.

When asked about the relationship between Graceland and the rest of the Memphis museum community, Patty Bladon, assistant director of Memphis Brooks, admitted she uses Elvis's home as an enticement to lure scholars and speakers to come to Memphis. For Carmean, it's a litmus test for visiting academics. Sometimes, Carmean says, the most straight-laced, serious scholar will wax enthusiastic going through the house.

I felt both a rush of nostalgia for my own teen years and a queasy feeling not

knowing how to interpret the interior decoration—a monument to Elvis's decorating taste and to '70s style. Going from restrained dining room and living room with its 15-foot customized sofa to the so-called Jungle Room recalled houses of a bygone time where formal spaces, often sheathed in clear plastic and divided by runners protecting deep shag carpet, contrasted with bedrooms, rec rooms, and dens in which adoles- cent aesthetics ran wild.

The second-most-visited house in the United States (the White House is first) attracts 600,000 pilgrims a year and opens out back to a number of oth- er buildings Elvis added during his life at Graceland. A Meditation Garden with a semicircle of Greek columns shelters the graves of Elvis, his parents, and paternal grandmother, as well as a marker of his stillborn twin brother buried in Tupelo. While clearly a muse- um, featuring displays of Elvis's concert outfits and gold records lining the walls of a former raquetball court, Graceland belongs to a small number of American *loci sancti* that pay homage to a past still (Please turn to "Memphis," page 63)

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Publishing: Focus on Reality

BY ELAINE D. GUSTAFSON AND SANDRA E. KNUDSEN

Everything was on track. The next item on the publications priorities list was a new guide to the collection. Funding: In place. Research, writing, and editorial assistance: In place. Writing assignments: Allocated. New color photography: Begun. Sample entries: Ready for review. Then reality intruded.

The last guide to the Toledo Museum was published in 1976, a picture book with minimal text. Fifteen thousand copies sold out in about 10 years, and the museum store begged for a replacement. After much consideration, the curatorial staff, museum educators, and store manager recommended pro-

ducing a volume that responded to visitor requests for more information about more objects. This appealed to the curators' wish to promote the collections, including new accessions. It supported the educators' desire for succinct texts about as many important works as possible, written in accordance with guidelines developed for interpretive labels in exhibitions and

Elaine D. Gustafson is research curator for the Toledo Treasures: Selections from The Toledo Museum of Art project, and Sandra E. Knudsen is coordinator of publications at The Toledo Museum of Art.

the galleries. The museum store liked the appearance and low retail cost of guides published recently by art museums in Los Angeles, Seattle, and Minneapolis.

In order to improve the language and focus of the texts, we planned a series of focus groups to review sample entries. The Toledo Museum of Art has a long tradition of involving visitors in the evaluation of proposed texts and designs for brochures and gallery information. Our two main review techniques have been gallery-based: We invite visitors to indicate preferences and write comments in front of sample labels, or we conduct interviews with

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selected visitors. For the guide, however, we wanted to hear how such a souvenir book might be used outside the museum and to explore alternative text wordings. We therefore decided to assemble focus groups representing the public.

The very first group shook our careful plans to the foundations. The participants stated immediately, firmly, and unanimously that the draft texts were fine, but the proposed design was a serious problem: page size, illustration size, text density, and type layout were all unappealing. They declared that they would probably buy the proposed guide only to be "loyal." It would then be consigned to a shelf at home as a "reference" book. Clearly, we were off track. But because of the open nature of the focus groups, we were able to explore this unexpected revelation immediately, and use the information to redirect the project.

The Toledo Museum of Art has about 300,000 visitors per year. It enjoys broad community awareness and support. Surveys reveal that our visitors come overwhelmingly from northwest

Ohio and southeast Michigan and that there is a high percentage of frequent visitors (three or more visits per year). Therefore, sales of a new guide would be overwhelmingly to a faithful but potentially critical audience. There were no funds to hire a marketing firm to conduct an assessment of randomly selected people. But this constraint was actually a virtue. After all, we already knew that a guide to an art museum collection is a souvenir. Its objective is not to inspire a love of art in nonvisitors or infrequent visitors. Our modest aim is to ensure that what we write and illustrate will enhance and continue the gallery experience of visitors, both local and out-of-town. (The next most common uses would be for development, public information, and exchange with other art institutions.) So we invited potential consumers to help us prepare the guide they wanted.

Recruiting: We planned three focus groups drawn from museum volunteer groups. More than 500 people give almost 50,000 hours of service each year to the museum. For this special project we worked with three volunteer organi-

zations: docents, who receive several years of training and lead gallery tours for children and adults; museum aides, who run the annual membership campaign, manage the Collector's Corner sales gallery for contemporary art within the museum, and handle a variety of entertainment functions for the public; and special services volunteers who provide a wide range of support for departments, projects, and exhibitions. We asked the directors of these groups to recommend individuals who were articulate, could work well on an ad hoc committee, and were willing to defend their opinions. From this volunteer pool we sought a range of representatives to speak for the public: men and women, university students, seniors, minority groups, artists, art lovers, and spouses of museum supporters.

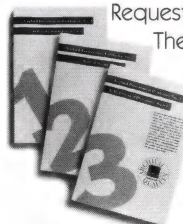
Invitations: Each person was first contacted by telephone and asked if she was willing to help for a few hours. The project was described, and each person was advised that she had been recommended because she had offered good advice in the past.

Preparation: Each participant

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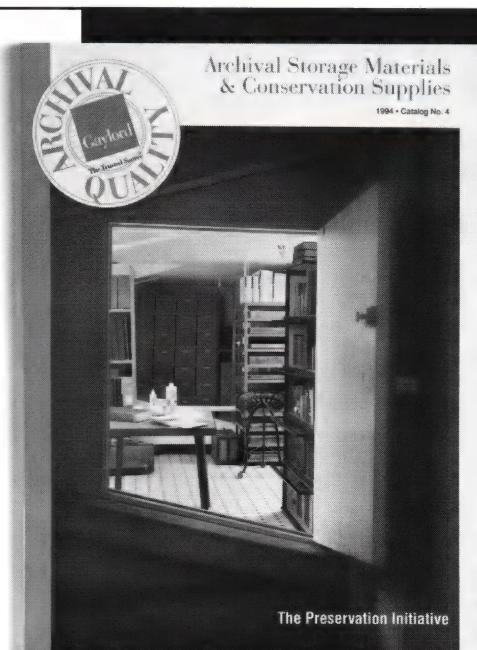
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received a letter acknowledging her assistance. Copies of the guide's concept statement, proposed contents, and three sample entries formatted on the computer to approximate book design were included in the packet.

Group meetings: We conducted work in three segments of about 45 minutes each. The participants—eight to 12 volunteers plus two or three staff members—sat around a table, introduced each other, and tried to create a relaxed atmosphere. First, the group discussed the three entries received in the mail. Second, three additional texts were read and analyzed as a group. Finally, the group divided into smaller groups and went into the galleries to discuss common visitor questions in front of works of art and how they might be addressed in brief texts.

Follow up: After the group meetings, we sent letters repeating our gratitude for the participants' time and letting them know we were taking their advice seriously.

The biggest problem we encountered during the meetings was that the volunteers were terribly concerned about

hurting staff members' feelings. They were aware we wanted frank opinions, but many knew us personally and courtesy may have curbed their tongues.

During the first meeting, not one but several people criticized our proposed book design and demonstrated what they liked, presenting examples of other museum guides they had purchased at museums around the world. Many wanted to tell us about previous museum visits and purchases of similar publications.

Guidebook design advice included:

1. All illustrations should be in color and as large as possible: They are what entice people to buy the book, and they are what attract readers as they browse through the pages, reenacting the experience of strolling through the museum;
2. Page size should be large: 8.5 x 11- and 9 x 12-inch formats were admired; larger sizes were considered unwieldy and hard to pack in luggage, and smaller sizes were derided as meager;
3. Type should be large, with wide leading and generous margins;
4. Identification credits (medium, size, accession number, donor acknowl-

edgment) should be unobtrusive or omitted;

5. Two narrow columns of type would be easier to read than one wide column;

6. Bibliography is not needed;

7. There was a true difference of opinion about how many objects to include. The docents wanted as many objects as possible; all other participants preferred fewer and larger images.

Discussion of the draft texts was less dramatic but equally comprehensive. For the review we selected six draft entries, varying from objects to paintings, from ancient to contemporary art. Across the focus groups there was consensus about these significant factors:

1. First explain what a work of art is (including its function if it is not a painting) and describe the subject;
2. Next explain who made it, whether an individual or a workshop;
3. Introductory sentences and first paragraphs should grab the reader's attention;
4. Focus on each individual work of art. Do not try to write a history of art;
5. Do not refer to anything that is

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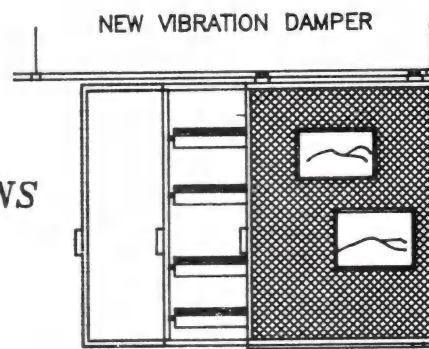
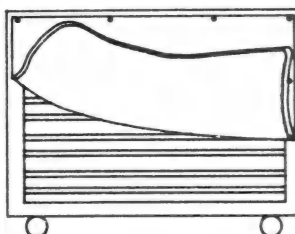
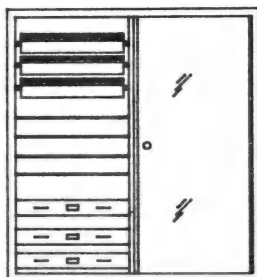
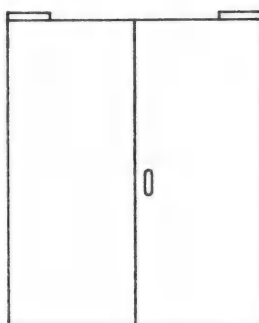
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not visible in the published illustration;

6. For pre-20th-century art, explain the image or narrative first, then provide contextual or background information;

7. For 20th-century art, the foremost desire is to understand the artist's intent and to obtain some glimpse into the artist's mind, ideally through a quotation;

8. Be succinct and focus on only one or two important points;

9. Avoid art historical jargon: Define unfamiliar words, including art terms such as Baroque and classical. (Do not include a glossary);

10. For furniture and decorative arts, the primary interest is how the object was used and in what kind of setting; technique is only of incidental interest;

11. For graphic arts, photography, metalwork, and glass, the first interest is in subject matter and then context.

Most of the focus group participants revealed themselves to be enthusiastic but surprisingly passive consumers of information about art, absorbing (and enjoying) information about everything rather indiscriminately, from technique

to historical context to scandalous trivia. It was slightly disheartening to realize that many were willing to trust the museum staff to determine priorities and select all necessary explanations. Several participants attend Toledo Museum functions, gallery talks, and lectures regularly. They explained that they like to come away with the feeling that they have learned something new in a pleasant way. But it was rather disappointing to realize that they are seldom sufficiently engaged to share new ideas accurately.

All three focus groups agreed that they buy souvenir guides to a museum collection in order to remember what they have seen. Price was somewhat of an issue, but much less than we anticipated, because almost everyone agreed she would prefer to pay \$20 to \$25 (or up to \$40) for a large-format book with fewer large illustrations than \$9.95–12.95 for a small-format book with lots of little illustrations. The volunteers' most delightful advice was to publish a guide that would be worthy of "their" museum collection, one they could display on the coffee table at

home and share with family, friends, and out-of-town visitors. A few specifically hoped for a beautiful book they could give as a present.

We found these focus groups an eye-opening and valuable research tool. Many professionals on our staff—curatorial, education, and retail—had spent considerable time trying to anticipate what our visitors wanted. But the focus groups provided a powerful dose of reality, forcing us to think about ideas that we had never considered and providing insights into the behavior and attitudes of some of our most loyal consumers.

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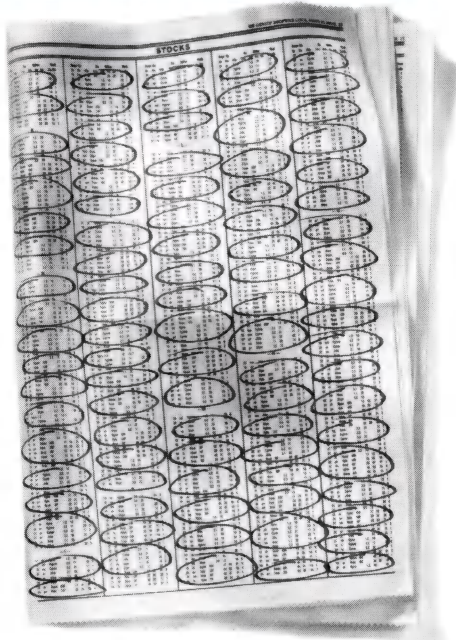
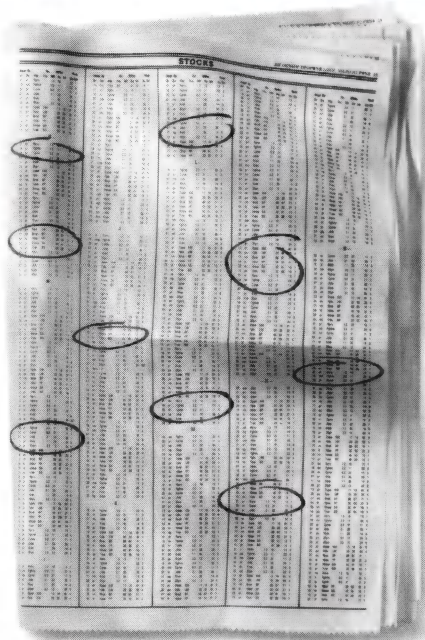
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(*"History," continued from page 35*)

near-legendary figure who began all of this around 1930, Adelma Grenier Simmons.

Yet nothing I have said conveys the real magic of this place, its openness and accessibility, its multisensory appeal, its lack of pressure or structure, the sense of being out of foreground time and deeply in touch with the great cycles of nature and the universe. If you doubt that this is a background experience, contrast it with something like the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center in Oklahoma City, where all is guns and violence, macho swagger, and undiluted worship of male aggression. These two places are not the same. Nor are they equal.

But don't we already have plenty of background history sites—historic houses, living history farms, and the like? These are not quite equivalent. At Caprilands, there are no people in funny clothing claiming to live in some time other than the present; no false separation of the natural and cultural worlds, of natural history and human history; no regimentation, required

routes, forced tours, or pressure to buy and move on; no sexism, racism, classism, or warism.

Caprilands provides a deep sense of connection with life and all living things; a profound awareness of the forces of growth and regeneration; an understanding that all is mutable, that everything changes, the plants, the gardens, the buildings, ourselves; freedom to touch and sample anything and everything; and a heightened sense of self-awareness coupled with a pervasive sense of wholeness and well-being.

Caprilands is not history as we typically encounter it. For that matter, I suppose that I am not a typical historian but my interest in the past is well documented. I return frequently to Caprilands and repeatedly enjoy the experience, which I would define as historical in the fullest understanding of that term. On the other hand, I rarely visit orthodox historical sites and agencies unless I am paid to do so. Even then I don't find many of them engaging or enjoyable.

I have suggested that historical organizations can modestly transform them-

selves by intensifying their commitment to telling the truth, or they can make more dramatic change by honoring life in the background and playing out the ramifications of that decision.

Institutions taking the latter course, however, will have to re-examine the fundamental nature and structure of their organization, for form and content are inseparable, and it is unlikely that background history can flourish in a severely foregrounded institution. If they really mean to take the radically humane route of embracing background history, they will have to rethink the museum field's cherished notions about professionalism, hierarchy, authority, preservation, and institutional longevity.

And that will be for the better. One of the lessons we learn at Caprilands is that change is the natural order of things. Stasis is death. Museums and historical societies have too often been likened to mausoleums, deadening houses filled with dead things. Any changes that can bring life and social responsibility back into these institutions are more than welcome. **M**

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munity in terms of tourism, jobs, and purchasing power. What will justify the continuing public investment in such an institution when some other entity (a sports team, a theme park, a rock concert amphitheater) can demonstrate that—for a similar public investment—an even greater economic impact might be achieved? If museums cannot assert their importance as museums, then museums may not be perceived as important at all.

More troubling in this respect is the extent to which some museums have begun to stress general educational objectives as the principal outcome for which they ought be valued. By doing so, they may ultimately leave themselves vulnerable to the claims of more traditional educational institutions that these latter could, with a only little inexpensive tinkering, deliver a comparable value at a fraction of the cost. The recent emergence of so-called “single-subject museums”—story-centered rather than object-centered, and relying on what the designer Ralph Appelbaum

(a leading practitioner of the form) describes as “theatrical constructs” instead of what he calls a “giant cabinet-of-curiosities approach”—may pose a similar problem. The experiential outcome for which these museums aim may eventually (as soon, perhaps, as the widespread advent of virtual reality) be accomplishable by other and, again, less costly means. When incomparability is no longer an issue, then such cost comparisons may justly become the single criterion by which an institution is judged. The museum that casts its aspirations in such nontraditional terms cannot complain of “apples and oranges” when it finds itself unexpectedly measured against different types of organizations that can provide comparable value at far lower cost.

The ability of many museums to define their intended outcomes and to specify what they would consider a successful level of achievement might have an important side effect. It could help lay to rest the perception that museums sometimes operate as what Philip M. Nowlen, director of the Museum Man-

agement Institute, has called "federations of self-interest." In a field so largely self-initiated, the images that Nowlen conjures are all too familiar: the museum whose governing board believes that organizational survival is the institution's driving and highest purpose; the museum whose staff channels disproportionate effort into its own professional development; the museum created for no better reason than to house a privately gathered collection that might otherwise have had to be dispersed; the museum that survives primarily as a social focus for those who support and take turns governing it. Future funding prospects may be dimmest for those museums that appear to be little more than sites for self-indulgence, and brightest for those that can most adequately answer the question, "To what ongoing public need is this institution a response?"

It will be argued by those who resist these impending hardball questions—those who find them crude, insensitive to cultural values, too money-minded (*Please turn to Forum, page 62*)

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Take a closer look at the characteristic dots present in Georges Seurat's (1859-1891) neo-Impressionist masterpiece *Les Poseuses* (The Models), which will welcome visitors to "From Cézanne to Matisse: Great French Paintings from the Barnes Foundation," at the Art Gallery of

Ontario starting Sept. 17. Though seemingly authentic, they are actually composed of infinitesimal dots created by 3M's proprietary electrostatic printing process, Scotchprint. After the Barnes exhibition's third stop in Tokyo, it was decided that *Les Poseuses*, one of the legendary collection's largest works at 78 inches by 98 inches, should be returned to its home in suburban Philadelphia. Management of the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, the fourth stop, did not want visitors to miss this rare work. They chose to employ 3M's patented system of high-resolution scanning and four-color electrostatic printing to create a stunning copy of *Les Poseuses*.

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(Forum, continued from page 60)
or too result-oriented—that such inquiries constitute nothing more than an inappropriate effort to apply a clumsy cost-benefit analysis to an activity that belongs in some different sphere altogether. While there may certainly be institutions—the family, public schools, religious orders—to which such a cost-benefit analysis seems inappropriate, nowhere is it written that museums necessarily will or ought to be exempt from such scrutiny. That museums were once described as “temples of the human spirit” is no guarantee that they will be forever considered sacred. Nor is the fact that they have been well-supported in the past a guarantee that they will always have such an entitlement.

If this analysis still seems far-fetched, consider health care. The time is fast approaching when, in allocating health-care resources, public policy-based decisions will have to be made about the value of providing care to one patient in comparison to another, about the value of—literally—saving one life rather than another. That the lives involved may all be worthwhile will be beside the point. Not every human being can be saved, and—hateful as we may find the thought—medical care must ultimately be rationed by public decision, just as it has hitherto been rationed by the less visible forces of the marketplace. Might one reasonably expect something more clement for museums?

When the anticipated crunch in public and private funding materializes, worthiness alone may not justify the continued support of every museum or similar institution. The questions that each museum may have to answer are just these hardball ones: Are you really worth what you cost, or merely worthwhile? Could somebody else do as much or more than you do for less? Are you truly able to accomplish anything that makes a difference, or are you simply an old habit, or possibly even a kind of indulgence? The great majority of museums will be able to develop positive and solidly convincing responses. It is by no means too soon, however, for a museum's governing authority and senior staff to begin to consider just how that might best be done. Hardball is nigh. **M**

(Memphis, continued from page 50)
alive in the minds of its visitors.

If Graceland and the story of Elvis it enshrines represent the fulfillment of the American Dream, another Memphis institution limns its opposite—the nightmare of racism. South of Beale Street, the downtown mecca of Memphis Blues, sits the National Civil Rights Museum, on the site and containing part of the Lorraine Motel where in 1968 the Rev. Martin Luther King fell to an assassin's bullet after coming to Memphis to help settle the city's intractable sanitation workers' strike.

After King's death, the area became economically depressed. Drugs and crime exploded and businesses fled. The owner of the Lorraine Motel, about to lose to taxes what had become a rooming house, called a local radio station to decry the possible loss of such a landmark. With the support of the station manager, he began a campaign to preserve the motel and turn a site of tragedy into a monument commemorating the civil rights movement. At first there was uncertainty whether to make

it a museum or a cultural center. The word "museum," says its director, Juanita Moore, "carried a stigma among Memphis blacks." Like Graceland, the motel immediately became a destination for Memphis visitors, many of whom are foreigners who have modeled their civil rights movements on the American example.

Of the original motel, only the suite of rooms where the killing took place remains; rooms 306 and 307 constitute the climax of the museum visit and epilogue of the story that unfolds in a series of dramatic vignettes in the 10,000-square-foot exhibit area. Moore decided that the story of civil rights had to be paramount. Her previous experience at the National African American Museum in Wilberforce, Ohio, taught her that to reach the black community, the exhibits had to be "people-centered" and not "object-centered." The story of civil rights presented in the exhibit carries such dramatic and emotional weight that it seems beside the point whether the Montgomery bus displayed was the actual one Rosa Parks refused to

"mind her place" in 40 years ago.

Moore believes the museum has helped Memphis come to grips with a civic embarrassment—the assassination—and build the foundation for open discussion of the city's past injustice. In its interactive multimedia presentation of watershed civil rights events such as *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Selma March, and the March on Washington, the exhibit uses the language of the media that originally brought news of these events into the living rooms of Americans during the '50s and '60s. Like Graceland, the museum's "sacred way" or "stations of the civil rights cross" inspires visitors to reminisce where they were when the dramatic events unfolded.

The Wonders series, Graceland, and the National Museum of Civil Rights, each in its own way, have attracted hundreds of thousands of atypical visitors. Elvis probably never visited any Memphis museums. If Elvis is still alive and should return, he might be more likely to grace the city's invigorated museums with his presence. **M**

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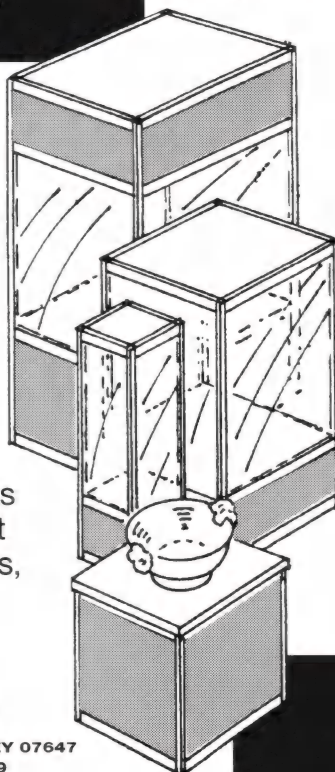
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(M Notes continued from page 29)

at the Smithsonian and at other institutions all over the world, Joelle and Cable are not worried about storage capacity because these images stay in the memory of the home institutions' computers.

"We just make a link to the Vatican and point to that image," Cable said. "so nothing actually sits on our machine."

"I see it happening on two levels—on the community level and on the international, global level. When I hear people say, 'I'm a Boston artist or I'm a New York artist,' I think that's hogwash. It's a global society."

"You press on their [a character's] picture, which launches a movie, and they give their confessional," Joelle said, "and as the confessor, you must respond to them and make judgments."

Typed comments then appear on the wall-sized screen and are instantly sent through the Internet to another exhibition screen in France where viewers will be able to type a response (assuming they are not asleep because of the time difference).

"At this moment, we don't have a translator," said Joelle, "but we are considering software that has a built-in translation program and can be used with Mosaic."

The exhibit environment in Boston and Paris, which creates a meditative electronic temple, invites viewers to communicate their ideas on the psychological issues of identity. The temple atmosphere will include incense, smoke, light, and sound so that it will be a total sensory experience.

"I want to bring the person into a meditative mood—or creative environment—so that after hearing the confessions of the characters in 'The


Confessional,' they will be inspired to share their thoughts in stories," Joelle said.

The exhibit also includes a printer so people can print out a copy of their comments on paper to take with them. Besides the gallery visitors, at least a dozen high schools and two colleges will be involved in the project, and Joelle hopes to attract museum participation as well. "We are definitely looking for museums and colleges to get involved in this Internet experience," Joelle said.

"I see it happening on two levels—on the community level and on the international, global level. This gets us out of the idea that we're a Boston museum. When I hear people say, 'I'm a Boston artist or I'm a New York artist,' I think that's hogwash. It's a global society."

In addition to working on her thesis exhibition, Joelle teaches a class called "The Electronic Book: A Multimedia Approach" in Tufts University's Experimental College, which is open to all students at the school. She believes many artists are no longer looking at a subject from one perspective but are approaching their work through multidisciplines—looking at their work from a linguistic, anthropological, or literary point of view. And she said she was amazed at how quickly her students—who have backgrounds in business, art, literature, and science—were able to adapt to this multidisciplinary approach to electronic media.

"Making these relationships between these disciplines is the ultimate goal," she said.

The exhibition will be presented at Tufts University's Koppelman Gallery in the Aidekman Art Center on the Tufts campus Nov. 17-27. Prior to the exhibit, "The Confessional" will be on-line at Tufts. Schools, museums, and individuals throughout the U.S. and Europe will be able to write to "The Confessional" prior to exhibit time, and contributions to this international electronic book will be presented to viewers during the exhibit. For information about how a museum can participate in the project, contact Kelly Williams of Public Information Resources, Inc., in Boston, (617) 254-7415.—Lauren Santos 

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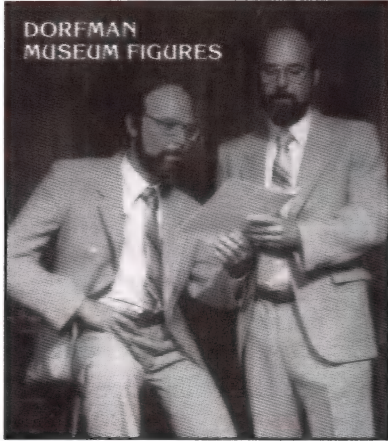
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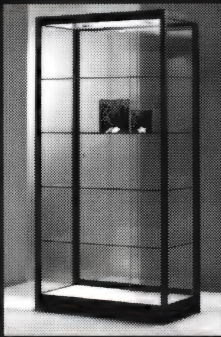
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FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

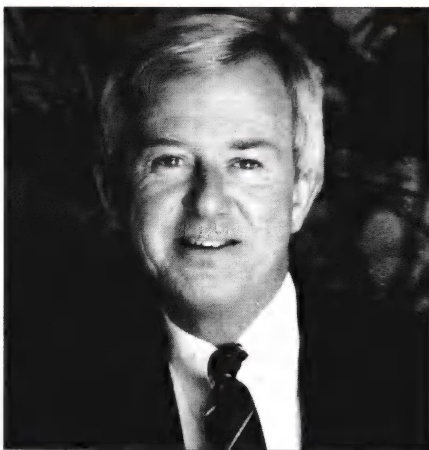
Counting on Museums

BY EDWARD H. ABLE, JR.

While doing some late spring clean-up at AAM headquarters, staff uncovered a thin pamphlet whose brittle and yellowing covers contained a wealth of information on attendance figures at museums in the United States and Canada from 1924 to 1928. A notice appearing in the March 15, 1930, issue of *The Museum News* estimated that more than 32 million visitors entered U.S. museums in 1928. If small museums and large ones that failed to report attendance figures were included, the report stated, "the attendance would probably reach a figure equal to one-third of the total population of the country." The author of this 1930 news item interpreted this figure to show "the potential influence of museums on the cultural development of the nation."

Museums for a New Century, AAM's ground-breaking 1984 assessment of U.S. museums, continued the spirit of the 1930 attendance report by making the compilation of accurate statistics a high priority. Recommendation 13 stated: "Policy makers both inside and outside the museum field must have current and comprehensive data on the museum field to guide their decisions. The availability of this information will aid all who strive to meet the needs of museums and communicate both the needs and the services of these important institutions to others."

AAM takes great pride in announcing that this recommendation has been fulfilled with the publication of *Muse-*



Edward H. Able, Jr. is president and CEO of the American Association of Museums.

ums Count, a compendium of facts and figures resulting from the most extensive survey of the museum field ever undertaken. In clear, understandable prose bolstered by 35 graphs and charts, a broad picture of U.S. museums emerges. On every page and in every statistic, the inescapable conclusion is evident that museums provide lasting value for society, that they indeed "count" in providing vital scholarly research and opportunities for informal education. The book also testifies to the scope, diversity, size, and services of the museum community.

With this data in hand, museum advocates can make their case to the public, community leaders, and lawmakers and demonstrate the breadth of the museum community and the public purpose it serves. A few of the statistics

bear out this message: The United States has 8,200 museums operating 15,600 sites. Many are recent creations—only 4 percent were founded before 1900, while 40 percent were founded after 1970. Creating a museum appears to be a vital activity not only in large cities, but in even the smallest towns. Museums care for three-quarters of a billion objects and specimens and 11 million lots (small objects counted in groups). U.S. museums employ 150,000 people and engage the support of 377,000 volunteers.

And, as an index of how museums have burgeoned in number and importance since the 1930 survey, according to *Museums Count*, museums have attracted more than 500 million visits a year and 678 million when you include participants in off-site museum programs like classroom presentations and outreach programs—a figure that is three times the U.S. population in the 1988 census.

Keeping pace with the growth of the museum community, AAM has expanded its membership to include more than 13,700 members comprising 9,600 museum professionals, 2,900 museums, and 1,200 corporate members.

These data merely skim the surface of important statistics describing the museum community. I urge you to purchase a copy of the report from the AAM bookstore and share its findings with all those who have a stake in maintaining the vitality of U.S. museums. **M**

Coming Up in
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November/December 1994:
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Coda

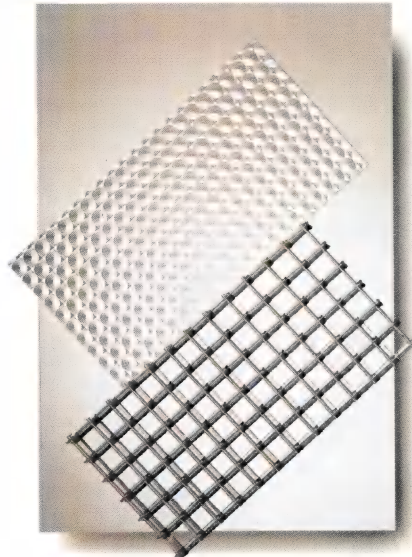


Danny Lyon, Llanito, New Mexico (1970). From the exhibition "Danny Lyon, Photo-Film," organized by the Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Ariz., in collaboration with the Museum Folkvang, Essen, Germany.

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